

MINUTES OF SCHOOLS FORUM MEETING - TUESDAY, 10 JANUARY 2017

Present:

Primary School Head Teachers/Representatives

Ms J Hirst, Bispham Endowed (Chairman)

Ms Elaine Allen, St John Vianney

Special School Head Teacher/Head Teacher Representative

Mr C Andrew, Woodlands

Academy School Representatives

Mr S Brennand, Unity

Ms J Carroll, Roseacre

Mr G Dow, Anchorsholme

Mr M Gray, Waterloo

Ms T Harrison, Thames

Mr D Medcalf, St Georges

Mr N Toyne, Devonshire

Mrs S Wilson, Fylde Coast Academy Trust

Non-Schools Members

Ms A Baines, Staff/Teacher Associations

Ms W Casson, Pupil Referral Unit

Ms Cathy Butterworth, Primary School Governor

Mr D Dickinson, Staff/Teacher Associations

Mr R Rendell, Early Years Strategic Group

In Attendance:

Councillor Kathryn Benson, Cabinet Member for Schools and Learning

Ms L Donkin, Public Health Specialist

Mr M Golden, Finance Manager

Mr P Sharples, Schools Funding and PFI Manager

Mrs A Whitehead, Head of Schools, Standards and Effectiveness

Mr C Williams, Democratic Governance Adviser (Minutes)

Mrs H Wood, Head of Business Support and Resources.

1 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

The Forum agreed to elect Ms Jo Hirst as Chairman of the Schools Forum for 2017.

2 ELECTION OF VICE CHAIRMAN

The Forum agreed to elect Mr Cole Andrew as Vice Chairman of the Schools Forum for 2017.

3 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Ms Delyth Curtis, Director of People and Mr Richard Rendell, Early Years Strategic Group.

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4 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest on this occasion.

5 MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

Mrs Wood reported that following a review of the Forum membership, Ms Elaine Allen, Headteacher St. John Vianney RC Primary School, Mr Nick Toyne, Headteacher Devonshire Primary Academy and Mrs Susan Wilson, representing the Fylde Coast Academy Trust had been appointed.

The Chairman welcomed the new members and thanked Mrs Susan Diver, Headteacher Mereside Primary School and Children's Centre, for her service to the Forum.

6 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING HELD ON 11 OCTOBER 2016

The minutes of the Schools Forum held on 11 October 2016 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

7 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Minute 7: The Forum was advised that the outstanding paperwork related to the Early Years Allocations from Reserves had now been received from the two settings that had previously not submitted returns.

Minute 8: The Forum noted that some parents had chosen not to disclose details on the application form that would mean that the eligibility criteria for the funding was met. It was reported that schools could still approach the Council for funding if additional information comes to light following the admission of the pupil.

Minute 11: In relation to a proposed meeting between local residents and Headteachers to discuss the Free School at the former Arnold School site, Mrs Harrison advised that a consultation was underway and a follow-up meeting would be announced once it had closed.

8 SCHOOLS SAFEGUARDING ADVISER ROLE

Mrs Wood presented the report and reminded the Forum of some of the work undertaken by the Schools Safeguarding Advisor, Mr Paul Turner.

Members agreed that the role had been vital and especially relevant in the current local education climate.

Following a discussion about possible alternative arrangements, The Forum agreed that none of the options deliberated were desirable and therefore proposed that rather than extending the Schools Safeguarding Adviser's contract, Mr Turner should in fact be offered a permanent position, given the significant impact he had made in his time in the post. It was noted that the priority for the role would need to be considered alongside other calls on the available funding at each future budget review.

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Concerns about line management arrangements for Mr Turner were noted and it was agreed that he should be managed by someone within the School Effectiveness service as opposed to via Social Services.

The Forum agreed:

1. To approve the extension of the post of School Safeguarding Adviser on a permanent basis.
2. That the Schools Safeguarding Adviser post would be line managed within the School Effectiveness Division with effect from after the February 2017 half-term break, in response to a specific request.

9 DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT BUDGET MONITORING 2016/2017

Mr Mark Golden, Finance Manager presented the 2016/2017 Budget position.

In relation to the Schools Block, The Forum noted a £79,000 overspend related to insurance costs due to an increase in Insurance Premium Tax and a recoupmnt of funding converting academies.

Within the High Needs Block, an overspend of £69,000 in relation to Special Schools top-up funding was attributed to pupil numbers at Park exceeding the number of commissioned places. In addition, Mainstream school top-up funding had overspent by £36,000 as a result of high level ad-hoc support. The greatest overspend of £93,000 within the High Needs Block related to Out Of Borough placements. The Forum agreed that a piece of work to address this issue would be desirable especially to look at the situation in other Local Authorities.

It was reported that the Early Years Block had benefitted from underspends on Dedicated Schools Grant income, however the total overspend for 2016/2017 had been £178,000 as of 30 November 2016.

Mr Golden advised that the total overspend of £178,000 would have to be covered by the Uncommitted DSG Reserve though this totalled £1,207,445 thanks in part to a windfall payment of business rates following Highfield School's conversion to Academy status.

The Forum noted the report.

10 COMMISSIONING REVIEWS

The Item was deferred for consideration at the 14 March 2017 meeting.

11 SCHOOLS FUNDING FORMULA 2017/2018

Mr Sharples presented the report and provided background information regarding the proposals.

The Forum was advised that for 2017/2018, the Education Funding Agency had updated the IDACI banding methodology to return the IDACI bands to a roughly similar size (in

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terms of the proportion of pupils in each band) in 2016 compared to 2015. Mr Sharples added that for Blackpool, this meant that again a greater number of pupils now fell within the highest IDACI bandings. However, the proposals for a national formula were to set the IDACI banding values higher than those included in Blackpool's current formula, and to set the lump sum at £110,000 per school, compared to £165,000 in Blackpool's 2016/2017 formula. The Forum noted that the proposal was therefore to retain the IDACI values at the same levels as in 2016/2017, and instead reduce the lump sum from £165,000 to £150,000 per school in order for the formula to remain affordable.

In relation to PFI contracts, Mr Sharples reported that during legal discussions regarding the transfer of contracts for Highfield School as part of the academy conversion process, the local authority was advised by the Department for Education (DfE) that it was usual in these circumstances for the PFI affordability gap to be fed through the schools funding formula. The Forum noted the affordability gap in a PFI agreement comes as a result of government funding available to fund a scheme (PFI credits) not being sufficient to fund the full costs over the life of the agreement (25 years in this case). Mr Sharples advised that there had been a rates saving of circa £174,000 following the conversion of Highfield to Academy status. Therefore, affordability gap could be funded through the formula with no additional pressure on the formula or contribution required from the Council.

Mr Sharples also proposed that the capping and scaling levels be retained at 2% and 17% respectively in 2017/2018. He advised that the cap meant that each school would retain the first 2% of per pupil gains from one year to the next, and the scaling factor meant that schools would have any gains over and above the 2% cap scaled back by 17%, which would help to ensure that the formula was affordable overall. It was proposed that any shortfall/surplus in overall funding be recovered/released by small adjustments to the formula factors as appropriate.

The Forum agreed:

1. To retain the 2016/2017 funding per band values for the IDACI funding factor.
2. To reduce the lump sum from £165,000 to £150,000 per school.
3. To increase the PFI factor by £140,024 to account for the affordability gap on the Highfield PFI scheme.
4. To retain the capping and scaling levels at 2% and 17% respectively in order to cover the minimum funding guarantee (MFG) requirement and ensure that the formula remained affordable overall.

12 EDUCATION SERVICES GRANT UPDATE

The Forum considered the impact on the Council, academy schools and maintained schools of the ending by Central Government of the Education Services Grant.

Mrs Wood informed the Forum of the two separate elements of the grant previously received in the form of; the retained grant and the general grant. The former was only paid to local authorities, and funded the responsibilities they held for all pupils in the area, regardless of whether they were educated in maintained or academy schools. The latter was paid to local authorities in respect of the pupils in maintained schools and was also paid separately to each academy in respect of the pupils in their own setting.

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In relation to School Improvement, Mrs Wood reported that From September 2017, local authorities would receive a share of a £50 million school improvement fund to allow them to continue to monitor and commission school improvement for low-performing maintained schools. For any school improvement services offered over and above the statutory minimum, maintained schools could also choose to de-delegate funding through a vote by Schools Forum representatives. This was voted upon as part of Item 14 on the agenda.

It was also reported that a new £140 million Strategic School Improvement Fund would be made available to academies and maintained schools, aimed at ensuring resources were targeted at the schools most in need of support to drive up standards, use their resources effectively and deliver more good school places.

Given the impact of grant cuts, Mrs Wood highlighted the report proposal that maintained school representatives, including primary, special and pupil referral unit members, approve the amount of £19.42 per pupil to be retained from school budgets in respect of education functions previously funded by the Education Services Grant (excluding School Improvement) for the period September 2017 to March 2018.

Following a discussion, concerns were noted about the possible impact of the Central Government grant cuts, in particular on Blackpool's Education Welfare service. Members agreed that attendance and behaviour were key priorities for schools in Blackpool and any reduction in authority involvement in those areas would be detrimental. Mrs Amanda Whitehead reported that a review of the service was underway and she highlighted the importance of schools providing feedback in relation to the future of the education welfare service.

The Forum agreed:

1. To note the impact on the Council and academy schools of the ending by Government of the Education Services Grant.
2. That the local authority retain the amount of £19.42 per pupil from maintained school budgets (including primary, special and pupil referral unit) in respect of education functions previously funded by the Education Services Grant for the period September 2017 to March 2018.

13 UNISON DUTIES

Mr Dave Dickinson, Unison representative provided a summary of the report detailing the services provided by Unison to schools. Those included: representation of members in disciplinary and grievance meetings and hearings, attendance at management meetings and case review hearings, representation during redundancy consultations, advice and support on any workplace issue, including redundancy, redeployment, maternity and paternity issues, subjects related to disabilities, ill health and retirement, changes to terms and conditions, joint consultative meetings between unions and employers, job evaluations, Health and Safety advice and others.

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The three current Unison posts were all currently funded by Blackpool Council, with no contribution from schools. However, due to continuing budget reductions, the Council was having to reduce the number of posts to two in 2017/18. Mr Dickinson explained why he believed it was important for Blackpool schools to commit to the costs of facilities time so that it covered all staff equitably. The report recommendation was to de-delegate funding for facilities time to cover all levels of staff, including teachers and support staff, with a rate of £1.75 per pupil for support staff representation.

The Forum discussed the wider issue of financial pressures within all schools and questioned the nature of support provided and how funding would be spent.

The decision was deferred as part of Item 14 on the agenda.

14 DE-DELEGATION OF SERVICES AND EDUCATION FUNCTIONS 2017/2018

Mr Paul Sharples, School Funding and Private Finance Initiative Manager outlined the proposal to continue to de-delegate funding in 2017/2018 related to free school meal eligibility checks, insurances, and Professional Teacher Association (PTA) facilities time. In addition, the Forum noted that a decision related to de-delegation of Unison facilities time (deferred for consideration from the previous Item) would also be required. Furthermore, there was a new opportunity for the de-delegation of funding relating to the school improvement functions carried out by the local authority for maintained schools, over and above the statutory requirements

During the subsequent discussion, it was noted that some Academies within Blackpool had opted to have their free school meal eligibility checks performed by third party companies at significantly reduced costs, though it was acknowledged that the service offered by such companies was perhaps not directly comparable to that provided by the Local Authority, based on the frequency of the checks.

In relation to the proposal to continue to de-delegate funding for PTA union duties at £4.00 per pupil, the Forum agreed that some schools would benefit more than others dependent on how many Union members were employed and how often they used the various services. However, it was agreed that not to de-delegate could result in an unmanageable arrangement for schools to contend with.

Following a discussion about the level of school improvement support that the Local Authority might be able to offer in the future, the Forum expressed concerns that committing to further de-delegation of funding would not make sense until further assurances had been provided about the precise level of support that would be offered in the future.

The Forum agreed:

1. To the continued de-delegation of funding for free school meal eligibility checks.
2. To the continued de-delegation of funding for school insurances.
3. To the continued de-delegation of funding for PTA union duties at £4.00 per pupil.
4. Not to endorse the introduction of a 'per pupil' rate of £1.75 for support staff Union duties.
5. Not to de-delegate funding for School Improvement at £6.14 per pupil.

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6. Mr Mark Gray to circulate information related to private companies that provide online free school meal eligibility checks to allow schools an alternative to the Local Authority service provision.

15 PUPIL GROWTH CONTINGENCY 2017/2018

Mr Paul Sharples reported that it was time for the annual review of the criteria and allocation of Pupil Growth Contingency in 2016/2017.

The Forum discussed the recommendation to approve the value of the pupil growth contingency at £207,645 in 2017/2018, which Mr Sharples advised had been calculated based on the October 2016 census data. He explained a number of pupil-driven factors included in the calculation that included; basic entitlement per pupil and funding for total deprivation, Looked After Children, English as an Additional Language, Pupil mobility and prior attainment. He added that all of those figures had then been individually divided by the number of pupils on roll at each school.

It was proposed that the criteria for the allocation of the contingency should be revised in order to apply to all schools, and not just primary schools.

During the subsequent discussion, the Forum expressed concerns about the potential cost of Pupil Growth Contingency for both Secondary and Primary elements of the new Free School once it had officially opened.

The Forum agreed:

1. To approve the value of the pupil growth contingency at £207,645 in 2017/2018, based on calculations from the October 2016 census data.
2. To approve the revised criteria for allocation of the contingency.

16 EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES HIGH NEEDS FUNDING 2017/2018

Mr Sharples reported that In 2013/2014 additional funding was delegated to schools to enable them to meet the costs up to £6,000 of high needs pupils. This funding had taken into account the fact that schools were already meeting some of the costs for some pupils with complex needs. This was distributed to schools through the IDACI formula factor. However, he added that this meant the distribution of additional funding could not be exactly matched to the incidence of high cost pupils in individual schools. It was noted that schools received exceptional circumstances funding if they were supporting a disproportionately high number of high needs pupils compared to their notional SEN budget.

The Forum was advised that in order to ensure that funding continued to be directed to schools where it was needed the most and avoid undue pressure on school budgets, the Local Authority recommended that the calculation of exceptional circumstances funding be amended from twice yearly to termly. The calculation would therefore be performed using September, January and April high-needs pupil numbers.

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The Forum agreed:

To increase the frequency of the Exceptional Circumstances High Needs Funding calculations to termly from April 2017.

17 SCHOOLS NATIONAL FUNDING FORMULA UPDATE

Mrs Wood reminded the Forum that in March 2016, the DfE launched a consultation on its proposals for a National Funding Formula for Schools. This was the first stage of a two-stage consultation, which ran for six weeks and closed on 17 April 2016.

The stage one document included a proposal to introduce a “hard” national formula in 2019/2020, with a “soft” formula being in place for the two intervening years of 2017/2018 and 2018/2019. The Forum was informed that a “hard” formula would see each school’s budget determined by central government, whereas a “soft” formula would redistribute funding at local authority level using the national formula, with a local formula then allocating school-level budgets within the available funding envelope. Following the appointment of a new Secretary of State for Education, an announcement was made in July 2016 that the “soft” formula would not be implemented in 2017/2018, but would be pushed back to 2018/2019.

The Forum noted that the second stage of the funding consultation was published on 14 December 2016, and would run for 14 weeks until 22 March 2017. The information published by the DfE incorporated illustrations of what each school might receive under the proposed formula.

Following a discussion, it was noted that the majority of Blackpool schools would benefit from the proposed changes, but that others stood to lose out financially. In particular, smaller schools with relatively low levels of deprivation were cited as those most likely to suffer under the proposals. It was agreed to hold a task and finish group meeting made up of members of the Forum and a combination of Headteachers and Governors to formulate a response to the consultation on behalf of the Schools Forum.

The Forum agreed:

1. To note the details of the Government’s proposals for a national schools funding formula as contained in the Department for Education’s second stage consultation paper.
2. To set up a task and finish group in February 2017 and to inform all relevant members, Headteachers and Governors of the date of the meeting once the details had been finalised.
3. To present a proposed response to the consultation for Schools Forum sign off at the next meeting on 14 March 2017.

18 HIGH NEEDS FUNDING REFORM UPDATE

Mrs Wood informed the Forum that the second stage of the High Needs funding consultation was published on 14 December 2016, and would run for 14 weeks until 22 March 2017. The information published by the DfE incorporated illustrations of what

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each local authority might receive under the proposed formula. Unfortunately for Blackpool, there would be no increase in funding, although all local authorities would be protected at current levels of spend.

As with Item 17, the Forum agreed to submit a response to the consultation and to discuss this at a further task and finish group to be set up in February 2017, with the precise date to be advised.

In addition to the contents of the report, the Forum was advised that new Special Free School provision had been proposed by the Local Authority initially for 48 places and an expression of interest had been formally submitted to the Department for Education (DfE).

The Forum agreed:

1. To note the details of the Government's proposals for reform to funding for High Needs, as contained in the DfE's second stage consultation paper.
2. To present a proposed response to the consultation for Schools Forum sign off at the next meeting on 14 March 2017.
3. Dr Simon Jenner, Principal Educational Psychologist/Service Manager Special Educational Needs and Disabilities, to inform schools of progress related to a potential new High-Needs Special School in Blackpool via the schools newsletter.
4. That an item be brought to a future meeting related to the Special Free School, if it received the go-ahead.

19 EARLY YEARS NATIONAL FUNDING FORMULA UPDATE

Mrs Wood reminded the Forum that In August 2016, the Department for Education launched a consultation entitled "An Early Years National Funding Formula – and changes to the way the three- and four-year-old entitlements to childcare are funded". The consultation ran for six weeks and closed on 22 September 2016.

It was reported that in December 2016, the Government issued its response to the consultation, as well as provisional funding allocations at Local Authority level. As with the current system, allocations would be revised based on participation after the January 2017 and January 2018 censuses.

Mrs Wood informed the Forum that the Council had already commenced a review of early years support services in order to determine how best to achieve the required reduction in costs held centrally. She added that the proposed formula and plans for central expenditure would be brought to the next meeting of Schools Forum in March, in time for budgets to be sent to providers by the end of that month.

The Forum agreed:

1. To note the details of the Government's changes to Early Years funding.
2. To the proposals for the next steps of the implementation of changes to Blackpool's Early Years Funding Formula.

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3. To receive a report on the proposed formula and plan for central expenditure at the 14 March 2017 meeting.

20 ACADEMY UPDATE

Mrs Amanda Whitehead, Head of Schools, Standards and Effectiveness reported that Mereside Primary School had now converted to academy status and that a consultation regarding the future status of Claremont Primary School had been undertaken.

In addition, the Forum was informed that bids for extensions to numbers of nursery places at four separate settings had been received and, of those, three had been successful, Happy Tots, George Street and West Park.

The Forum noted the update.

21 LOCAL AUTHORITY UPDATE

Mrs Amanda Whitehead reported that Ms Delyth Curtis, Director of People and Ms Amanda Hatton, Deputy Director of People would be leaving the Local Authority. She added that the Chief Executive would be appointing an interim Director of Children's Services whilst recruitment measures continued.

The Forum expressed an interest in having school representation on the selection panel for the future Director of Children's Services candidates.

The Forum agreed:

That Mrs Amanda Whitehead ask Mr Neil Jack, Chief Executive, Blackpool Council whether school representation on the selection panel for the future Director of Children's Services role had been considered.

22 PUBLIC HEALTH UPDATE

Ms Lynn Donkin, Public Health Specialist presented data related to levels of childhood obesity in Blackpool. She reported that 26.5% of children aged 4-5 and 40.0% of children aged 10-11 were overweight or obese, which were considerably higher than the national average.

Members of the Forum were encouraged to be a part of a Healthy Weight Summit to be held on 2 February 2017. Ms Donkin added that all Schools had been invited to attend.

It was reported that as part of the ongoing Fit-to-go programme in Blackpool, a 'Give Up Loving Pop' campaign would be launched with the aim of reducing sugar intake in school aged children, which had contributed to high levels of children being overweight and/or having significant tooth decay.

Ms Donkin informed members that a new Health Visitor model to incorporate greater school readiness preparation was currently being reviewed.

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The Forum noted the update.

23 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Members noted that the date of the next meeting would be Tuesday 14 March 2017.

Chairman

(The meeting ended at 1.12 pm)

Any queries regarding these minutes, please contact:
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