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MINUTES OF SCHOOLS FORUM MEETING - TUESDAY, 15 MARCH 2016

Present:

Primary School Head Teachers/Representatives

Ms J Hirst, Bispham Endowed
Ms S Diver, Mereside

Special School Head Teacher/ Representative

Mr C Andrew, Woodlands

Academy School Representatives

Mr S Brennand, Unity
Ms J Carroll, Roseacre
Mr G Dowe, Anchorsholme
Mr N Hodgkins, Devonshire (Chairman)
Mr D Medcalf, St Georges

Pupil Referral Unit Head Teacher/Representative

Ms W Casson, Pupil Referral Unit

Non-Schools Members

Ms C Butterworth, Primary School Governor
Ms A Baines, Staff/Teacher Associations
Mr D Dickinson, Staff/Teacher Associations
Mr R Rendell, Early Years Strategic Group

In Attendance:

Ms D Curtis, Director of People
Mr M Golden, Finance Manager
Ms C Swift, HR Business Partner (ITEM 5)
Ms H Shaw, Head of Business Support and Resources
Mr P Sharples, Schools Funding and PFI Manager
Mr C Williams, Democratic Governance Adviser (Minutes)

Apologies:

Mr M Gray, Waterloo (Academy School Representative)
Ms T Harrison, Thames (Academy School Representative)
Ms A Pickup, Blackpool Sixth Form College (post 16 Representative)

1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest on this occasion.

2 MINUTES OF THE LAST SCHOOLS FORUM MEETING

The minutes of the Schools Forum held on 12 January 2016 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

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3 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Forum was advised of a number of actions from the last meeting not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

Page 4: (Item 10 – Children’s Centre Update) Ms Shaw reported that a meeting between Ms Sara McCartan, Service Manager Children’s Centres and Headteachers to discuss the Children’s Centre Vision had taken place.

Page 6: (Item 12 – Dedicated Schools Grant Forward Planning 2016/2017 and Use of Reserves) Ms Shaw advised that the Education Funding Agency had decided not to provide additional support for Special Schools and that funding needed to come from existing budgets.

Page 8: (Item 16 – Schools Funding Formula 2016/2017)The Forum noted that in relation to the actions listed in relation to IDACI banding, the proposal to increase the Private Finance Initiative factor to account for the affordability gap on the Highfield PFI scheme was not made in the 2016/2017 formula since negotiations on the conversion to academy status were still ongoing. Also, no adjustment to the IDACI values was needed as there was no funding shortfall.

Page 9: (Item 18 – Academy Update) Ms Shaw circulated an Academy update to all members of the Forum following the last meeting.

4 FUNDING OF UNION DUTIES

Ms Hilary Shaw, Head of Business Support and Resources reported on developments since the last Forum meeting related to de-delegation of funding of Union duties. The Forum noted that following consultation with colleagues, the Maintained Secondary representative had voted to de-delegate funding for facilities time for both the Professional Teaching Association and also for Unison. In addition, the Maintained Primary representatives had voted to de-delegate funding for facilities time for the Professional Teaching Association but not for Unison.

Mr Dickinson questioned what had been the critical factor in the decision of the Primaries not to de-delegate for Unison. The additional cost and difficulties understanding how exactly money would be spent were cited as the main reasons for the decision.

The Forum agreed:

The proposed course of action in relation to the de-delegation of facilities time funding put forward by the Maintained Primary and Maintained Secondary School representatives.

5 SPECIAL SUPPORT ASSISTANTS UPDATE

Ms Cathy Swift, HR Business Partner offered clarification to the Forum on the issue of Special Support Assistants (SSA’s).

The Forum was advised that the issue surrounding the deployment of SSA’s related to the status of the school and whether it formed part of the Blackpool Council ‘entity’ from an

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employment law perspective. Members noted that Maintained and Voluntary Controlled schools would by definition fall under the Local Authority's umbrella. However, Academies, Voluntary Aided and Free Schools would not. There would be a clear expectation from an employment law perspective – although not necessarily under education law – for SSA's to be positively considered for suitable alternative employment when opportunities arose of a similar nature to the jobs that they were currently carrying out. Ms Swift advised that would be the case as there was a high likelihood that an Employment Tribunal would expect "the Council" in its entirety to redeploy those who held the necessary transferrable skills.

The Forum was advised that the SSAs would continue to be offered Voluntary Redundancy each term, and each request would be managed on a case by case basis. Ms Swift advised that the central pool of SSAs in Blackpool had now been reduced to 33 in total.

The Forum noted the update.

6 DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT BUDGET MONITORING 2015/2016

Mr Mark Golden, Finance Manager presented the report and asked the Forum to note the 2015/2016 budget position. He added that a total overspend of £394,000 had been projected, some £65,000 worse than previously anticipated. The cause of the increase was attributed to an overspend of approximately £30,000 on out-of-borough placements and around £35,000 on top-up funding for Maintained Schools.

However, a number of positive figures were noted such as the two year old grant figure which would drop from £419,000 to £233,000 following an adjustment by the Department for Education at the year-end. Also, the Specialist Advice and Resourcing Services (SARS) Manager redundancy saving and Illuminate funding underspend were referenced and the Forum noted that despite setbacks, the uncommitted reserves still stood at around £1 million.

The Forum noted the report.

7 DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT BUDGET PROPOSALS 2016/2017

Ms Hilary Shaw, Head of Business Support and Resources, reported the initial Dedicated Schools Grant budget allocation for Blackpool in 2016/2017 was £104.5 million and she added that in relation to the High Needs Block, Blackpool would receive £231,000 from the additional national allocation of £92.5 million made available in 2016/2017 for growth in pupil places. The Forum noted that there would be a release of top-up funding following the planned closure of the Waterloo Special Education Resource Facility (SERF) unit in September 2016 which would mean a Specialist Teacher would be released that could potentially be used to conduct outreach work after that time.

In relation to the Early Years Block, the Forum was advised that the figure for Early Years Pupil Premium would be based on participation in 2016/2017 and as a result would likely be reduced.

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Ms Shaw advised that a request to the Education Funding Agency for additional places at Park Special Academy would not attract any additional funding and as a result would place considerable pressure on the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) Budget in 2016/2017.

The Project Search bid was described to the Forum. The project centred on the local authority providing post 16 students with learning difficulties with a work experience based education programme. Ms Shaw added that the outcome of the bid would be known in Mid-March 2016 and as such, had not yet been factored into DSG allocations for 2016/2017.

Ms Shaw advised that the amounts for both three and four year olds, and for two year olds were adjusted to reflect actual numbers and the same approach to adjustments would be taken with Pupil Premium numbers in 2016/2017, so the initial allocation of £120,000 would be revised through the course of the year.

The Forum noted that following previous discussions, the budget requirement had exceeded the initial allocation by £192,000 which would need to be met from the uncommitted reserves carried forward into 2016/2017. Members agreed that to reduce the 2016/2017 proposed allocation shortfall would be very challenging and would require regular close monitoring.

The Forum discussed the bid that had been submitted by a local Academy Trust for a Free School for nursery age through to 16 year old children in the south of Blackpool. It was generally supported that in addition to the existing bid, other proposers should also be welcomed, though members acknowledged that potential conflicts with existing local nursery providers may occur.

Following a discussion about the number of new to area children in the Pupil Referral Unit (PRU), members of the Forum requested more detailed information about those children be provided to assess the extent of the demand they placed upon the authority. Despite the number of programmes aimed at tackling the root causes of bad behaviour and thus the number of referrals into the PRU, Forum members acknowledged that cuts had impacted service delivery and demand for the PRU had remained consistently high. Ultimately, redevelopment and particularly a housing strategy designed to discourage transience were agreed as the best long term solution to the problem.

The Forum agreed:

1. Ms Hilary Shaw to produce a report for the next meeting to assess the viability and funding implications of the Project Search programme.
2. Ms Hilary Shaw to produce a breakdown of out-of-borough placements detailing the total number and cost of placements and whether any had been paid for by other authorities for the next meeting.

8 DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION CONSULTATION ON SCHOOL FUNDING REFORM 2017/2018

Ms Hilary Shaw, Head of Business Support and Resources gave a presentation on the Department for Education's proposals regarding a National Schools Funding Formula and reforms to High Needs funding, and also highlighted some of the key contextual information surrounding it. The Forum noted that the current funding allocation was

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based on historic, outdated information and had led to significant variation between schools with similar circumstances.

Ms Shaw advised that a two stage consultation regarding funding reform had been initiated and the first stage would run until 17th April 2016. The first phase would consider the design of the system, the role of the local authority and factors to include for each block. The second stage would look at individual proposals for factor weightings in greater detail with an Early Years consultation to follow later in 2016.

The factors in the Department for Education's proposals for a High Needs Formula document included population, health/disability, low attainment, deprivation and existing spend. In the proposals for a National Schools Funding Formula, the Forum was advised that a number of factors had not been incorporated such as mobility, which was a significant issue in Blackpool.

The proposals on the schools formula were for local Schools Forum to continue to set out the formula for their schools over the next two years alongside the publication of national allocations at schools level. From 2019/2020, the Government's intention was for a "hard" formula to be in place, which would see allocations for all schools set by the Department for Education.

One area of concern was the Contribution to Combined Budgets, through which Blackpool currently allocates £1 million a year to support the school-based Children's Centres. Under the proposals, there would be an opportunity to make a case for that funding to continue during the next two years, but the local authority would need to plan for that no longer being available from 2019/2020 at the latest.

Ms Shaw reported that in her opinion, the implications of funding reform for 2017/2018 had the potential to be largely positive for Blackpool and the high level of additional needs could result in extra funding being allocated.

The Forum noted the update.

9 SCHOOLS AND EARLY YEARS FINANCE (ENGLAND) REGULATIONS

Mr Paul Sharples, School Funding and PFI Manager informed the Forum of the key changes the local authority was making in order to comply with the revised regulations following the consultation on the School and Early Years Finance (England) Regulations 2015 that took place between 11th September and 13th November 2015.

The Forum noted the changes to the Schools and Early Years Finance (England) Regulations 2015 outlined in the report.

10 SCHEME FOR FINANCING SCHOOLS 2016

Mr Paul Sharples, School Funding and PFI Manager explained recent changes to Department for Education (DfE) guidance issued in December 2015, which were expected to be reflected in Blackpool's Scheme for Financing Schools with effect from March 2016.

As part of the recommendation, the Forum was asked to approve additional wording

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related to charges for the administration of School Admissions Appeals in the Scheme for Financing Schools 2016 in order to ensure compliance with the changes contained within the DfE guidance.

The Forum agreed:

To approve the recommended changes to the Scheme for Financing Schools 2016 outlined in the report.

11 ACADEMY UPDATE

Ms Delyth Curtis, Director of People, reported that no schools had shown intent to convert to Academy status since the last meeting, though Highfield Humanities College was due to convert on the 1st April 2016.

The Chairman noted that in discussions with other Headteachers, some had raised concerns about the future of maintained schools in the local authority area and that had led to some schools considering entry into a Multi-Academy Trust. Ms Curtis reassured the Forum that the local authority continued to play an important role in outcomes and School Improvement. She added that so far, schools conversion to Academy status had resulted in a budget impact to the authority of around £87 less available per child.

Members also noted that some schools had been involved in discussions to form partnerships in a bid to raise funds and generate efficiencies.

The Forum noted the update.

12 LOCAL AUTHORITY UPDATE

Ms Delyth Curtis, Director of People, reported that the authority still had a significant role to play in relation to the Forum as an overseer of schools within the Borough. She added that the authority would continue to offer support and guidance and was still involved with all Ofsted inspections of local schools.

The Forum received an update on key Council personnel. It was noted that former Deputy Chief Executive of Blackpool Council, Carmel McKeogh, had left the authority by way of voluntary redundancy and her post would not be replaced. Also noted was Councillor Collett's appointment as Cabinet Member for School Improvement and Children's Safeguarding, Mr Eric Jackson's appointment as part-time Executive Headteacher at Highfield Humanities College and Mr Chris Wardle as Deputy Headteacher also at Highfield Humanities College.

Ms Curtis advised that the Schools Organisation Strategy had been approved and was available to view on the Council's website. In relation to Public Health, the Forum noted that a consultation on the future of the school nursing service was underway and would run until 17th April 2016.

The Forum agreed:

For schools to respond to the consultation on the school nursing service before the deadline on April 17th 2016.

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13 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Members noted that the date of the next meeting would be Tuesday 21st June 2016.

Signed

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Chairman

(The meeting ended 11.45 am)

Any queries regarding these minutes, please contact:
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