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MINUTES OF SCHOOLS FORUM MEETING - TUESDAY, 13 OCTOBER 2020

Present:

Primary School Head Teachers/Representative

Dr E Allen, St John Vianney

Primary School Governor Representative

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

Special School Academy Representative

Ms S Fielder, Chair of Governors, Park Community Academy

Academy School Representatives

Ms A Bailey, Highfield (Star Academies)

Mr R Farley, Westminster (Chair)

Ms T Harrison, Thames

Mr D Logan, Roseacre (Achievement Through Collaboration)

Mr D Medcalf, St Georges

Pupil Referral Unit

Ms W Casson, Educational Diversity

Non-Schools Members

Mr N Adams, Staff / Teacher Associations

Ms A Baines, Staff/Teacher Associations

Mr S Hughes, Blackpool and the Fylde College

Mr R Rendell, Early Years Strategic Group

In Attendance:

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

Mr M Golden, Finance Manager

Mr P Thompson, Head of SEND

Mr P Turner, Head of Service for School Standards, Safeguarding and Inclusion

Mrs H Wood, Head of Business Support and Resources

Mrs D Bowater, Democratic Governance Adviser (minutes)

Ms S Butler, Advanced Practitioner, HeadStart (Item 8 only)

1 WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS AND APOLOGIES

Roger Farley welcomed attendees to the meeting and confirmed that as the Vice Chair, he would chair the Schools Forum meeting until the election of the new Chair and Vice Chair of the Forum in January 2021.

Introductions were made and apologies were noted from Karen Haworth, Woodlands, Janice Heywood, Revoe and Kirsty Thompson, School Funding Officer.

MINUTES OF SCHOOLS FORUM MEETING - TUESDAY, 13 OCTOBER 2020

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Hilary Wood confirmed that she had an interest in item 8, Moving on Up – Support for Pupils in Transition from Primary to Secondary School as she supported HeadStart as a part of her role. It was recognised that she would be presenting information on the item, but would not be included in the decision of the Forum as she was not a member.

The union representatives Neil Adams and Amanda Baines had a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in Item 11 due to representing Staff / Teacher Associations and were unable to vote on the recommendation to use union duty reserves and the incorporation of Unison in the funding arrangements for union duties with effect from 1 January 2021.

3 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 July 2020 were considered and agreed as an accurate record of the meeting.

Matters arising from the minutes were noted:

Illuminate Funding – the process of applying for and receiving the Illuminate funding – it was agreed that primary headteachers would discuss Illuminate Funding at their dedicated meetings in November 2020 and report back to the next Schools Forum meeting.

Public Health Updates – it was noted that Public Health updates would be presented to the Joint Consultative Group and would no longer be presented to the Schools Forum for consideration.

North West Deficit position – an update was included in the High Needs report at item 7.

Resolved:

- **To seek comments on the Illuminate funding process to include the application for funding and subsequent receipt of funds from primary headteachers at their November 2020 meeting and report back to the next Schools Forum.**

4 REVIEW OF FORUM MEMBERSHIP AND CONSTITUTION

Hilary Wood, Head of Business Support and Resources provided an overview report. It was noted that the Schools Forum Constitution required a review of membership at the first meeting of each academic year. Consideration should be made to the proportion of primary, secondary and academy representatives to ensure the proportions remained representative of pupil numbers in each phase. The Forum was recommended to agree to the balance of representatives between primary, secondary and academy mainstream schools. It was noted that no further conversions were recorded therefore no changes were required to the 11 Forum places for mainstream school members.

The Forum was recommended to agree to the continuation of arrangements in relation to provisions in the Constitution relating to numbers of representatives from any federation,

MINUTES OF SCHOOLS FORUM MEETING - TUESDAY, 13 OCTOBER 2020

multi-academy trust or academy sponsor. It was noted that where a Multi Academy Trust sponsored at least three Blackpool schools, they were entitled to two places on the Forum, otherwise, one place was allocated.

The Forum was recommended to agree to the next term of office for Forum Members to run from 1 January 2021 until 31 August 2022, with subsequent terms of office running for three academic years. It was noted that the new timescales would better accommodate the natural moving on of Members at the end of an academic year.

The Forum agreed to all of the recommendations outlined.

Resolved:

- **The balance of representatives between primary, secondary and academy mainstream schools was agreed as 11 out of the 17 Members.**
- **The continuation of arrangements in relation to provisions in the Constitution relating to numbers of representatives from any federation, multi-academy trust or academy sponsor was agreed.**
- **That the next term of office for Forum Members would run from 1 January 2021 until 31 August 2022, with subsequent terms of office running for three academic years.**

5 LOCAL AUTHORITY AND INCLUSION UPDATE

Paul Turner, Head of Service for School Standards, Safeguarding and Inclusion provided an overview report. Following the national school closures due to the Covid-19 pandemic, it was reported that most schools in Blackpool were fully open however Westcliff Primary Academy had closed and some bubble groups in South Shore Academy and St Mary's Catholic Academy were instructed to stay at home. It was noted that the overall attendance rate in Blackpool was above the regional average.

It was reported that the Improvement Board Strategy had been finalised and would be shared formally at a 'Moving Forward Together' event on 14 October 2020. The Literacy Strategy had been circulated for comments and would be re-drafted.

Further to the report, it was noted that there had been inspections at Westcliff Primary Academy and St Teresa's Catholic Primary School since the start of term. It was also reported that the Strategic Assessments and Moderation had been suspended but would resume in the same format after Christmas 2020.

In relation to Academies, it was noted that Sean Bullen and Rob Pritchard would assume executive leadership responsibilities and share the role of Chief Executive Officer at Fylde Coast Academy Trust. It was also noted that there was a new Headteacher at Langdale Free School, Linda Hillier. Tracey Harrison also reported that Thames Academy had joined Achievement Through Collaboration Multi-Academy Trust.

In relation to Inclusion, the BERA Report was presented for information and it was noted that there had been a rise in the numbers of Elective Home Educated pupils in comparison

MINUTES OF SCHOOLS FORUM MEETING - TUESDAY, 13 OCTOBER 2020

to previous years.

The report was noted.

6 DSG BUDGET MONITORING 2020 - 2021

Mark Golden, Finance Manager presented the report to show the budget position and reserves for the Dedicated Schools Grant as at August 2020. It was reported that budget monitoring forecasted a £582k overspend against a deficit budget of £1.231m. The total in year shortfall was estimated at £1.813m. Added to the brought forward deficit of £3.105m, the forecast by 31 March 2021 was a deficit of £4.918m excluding the maintained schools reserves of £2.392m and specific Union Fees reserves of £48k.

It was reported that special school numbers continued to rise creating a pressure of £366k. Costs incurred due to the new Resource Provision of £409k should see a reduction in Out of Borough placements over time and would be monitored as a part of the High Needs Block Medium Term Financial Plan progress. It was also reported that there were one off Covid-19 related costs of £372k for Out of Borough Placements and Post 16 Education but the pressures had been partially offset by the underspend on the Children's Centres (£733k).

Members were welcomed to raise comments or questions following the update:

It was asked whether the high spend Covid-19 costs could be reclaimed. It was noted that the costs incurred relating to schools could be reclaimed but currently not relating to the High Needs Block. Philip Thompson, Head of SEND indicated that Lancashire, Blackpool and Blackburn Councils had collectively written to the Department for Education through the Lancashire Resilience Forum outlining the costs incurred in the High Needs block due to Covid-19 to look to recoup them.

It was commented that the increased overspend was not good but was mainly due to one-off costs as opposed to rolling costs. It was noted that some of the set-up costs had been built into the SEND and Alternative Provision arrangements to make later savings. The Central Schools Services Block underspend was also acknowledged.

The report was noted.

7 HIGH NEEDS UPDATE

Hilary Wood, Head of Business Support and Resources provided an overview report to update on the latest developments relevant to the High Needs budget.

It was reported that there continued to be financial pressures on the High Needs budget. Following a survey of other North West local authorities regarding deficit levels Blackpool had the ninth highest predicted deficit at March 2021 but the fifth when taken as a percentage of the Dedicated Schools Grant allocations out of the 20 respondents.

It was reported that the Medium Term Financial Plan had been updated and the proposed

MINUTES OF SCHOOLS FORUM MEETING - TUESDAY, 13 OCTOBER 2020

Vision for SEND and Alternative Provision as outlined in July 2020 to Schools Forum had begun to be implemented, with the nine proposals intended to contribute to the repayment of the accumulated deficit on the Dedicated Schools Grant. A progress table was presented to outline progress of the nine proposals and the progress was noted as encouraging.

It was noted that the pupil numbers in special schools and Out of Borough placements continued to rise however plans for SEND Resource Provision within mainstream schools would help to address the rise in placements locally rather than using Out of Borough provision.

It was reported that the Department for Education had developed a designated template to help local authorities create a DSG management plan. Use of the plan was not compulsory but was encouraged to facilitate discussion with Schools Forums. After consideration, it was agreed that the local authority would continue to use their High Needs medium term financial plan to update Schools Forum on progress against deficit recovery costs, unless the Department for Education specifically required Blackpool Council to use the DSG management plan in future.

Given the large increases in High Needs funding in 2020/21 and 2021/22 and the anticipated increase in 2022/23 as well as the recovery plans, the local authority proposed a 4% increase in overall funding levels for special schools and the PRU from April 2021. The annual cost was estimated as £549k and would be in addition to the funding allocated next year through the High Needs block for teacher pay and pension grants.

Schools Forum members were asked to consider the proposal to increase funding for special schools and the Pupil Referral Unit of 4% increase and all agreed to the proposal.

Resolved:

- **The increase of 4% to funding levels for special schools and the Pupil Referral Unit was agreed.**

8 MOVING ON UP - SUPPORT FOR PUPILS IN TRANSITION FROM PRIMARY TO SECONDARY SCHOOL

(Sharon Butler, Advanced Practitioner, HeadStart attended the meeting for this item only.)

Hilary Wood confirmed that she was presenting the item in her role as a part of HeadStart. The report requested funding from the High Needs Block for the continuation of Resilience Coaches to provide targeted support to pupils in their transition from primary to secondary school. Schools Forum were asked approve an allocation of £216k per year from any Schools Block headroom and the High Needs Block to fund Resilience Coaches from January 2021 as outlined in the report. Furthermore, they were requested to receive a report after the first 12 month period to consider the continuation of funding subject to evaluation of the ongoing effectiveness of the Moving On Up programme.

It was reported that the Moving On Up project had been previously funded by the National Lottery Community Fund to support pupils and their families to ensure an effective

MINUTES OF SCHOOLS FORUM MEETING - TUESDAY, 13 OCTOBER 2020

transition from primary to secondary school. The Lottery funding would cease in December 2020. The aim was to identify and support those with lower resilience. Due to Covid-19 although more virtual ways of working had been developed, the data generated on the success of the project remained positive.

It was reported that the six resilience coaches would cost £216k per year to support two pupils per year six class, therefore a school with a three form entry would be able to access six places on the scheme. Schools would be able to buy more places as required.

Members of the Forum were invited to ask questions or make comments following the report:

It was requested that the proposal be viewed in context as there was the culmination of the request for the 4% increase to special school and PRU funding from Item 7 that had been agreed in addition to this request.

It was noted that without the approval of the funding some Unison members were at risk of redundancies. The Members affected wanted their representative to reiterate the success of the scheme as part of the discussion of the proposal.

It was commented that there were funds available from the Opportunity Area to support secondary school initiatives but no major projects so far for primary schools. It was requested that alternative ways be sought other than the use of the Dedicated Schools Grant and that the Opportunity Area be approached regarding a contribution to the Moving On Up programme. It was also recognised that some current year 6 children may need additional support this year due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

It was acknowledged that there may be some funding available from the Opportunity Area fund and agreed that Roger Farley would formally request that the Opportunity Area consider this.

It was noted that the funding would support children identified in year 6 for two terms and follow them to year 7 for one term. It was suggested that the places could be targeted rather than equitably spread across all schools and more places made available based on need rather than allocation to each school year 6 group. It was suggested that a whole town picture was required following the initial survey.

Schools Forum members were asked to agree to the requested funding from the High Needs Block for the continuation of Resilience Coaches to provide targeted support to pupils in their transition from primary to secondary school. Schools Forum members were asked approve an allocation of £216k per year from the Schools Block headroom and High Needs Block to fund Resilience Coaches from January 2021 as outlined in the report.

Pending availability of any funds from the Opportunity Area Fund, Members agreed to fund for 12 months and receive a report after the initial 12 month period to consider the continuation of funding subject to evaluation of the ongoing effectiveness of the Moving On Up programme.

MINUTES OF SCHOOLS FORUM MEETING - TUESDAY, 13 OCTOBER 2020

Resolved:

- Roger Farley to formally ask the Opportunity Area whether funding was available for the Moving On Up programme.
- Pending availability of any funds from the Opportunity Area Fund, Members agreed to approve the allocation of £216k from the Schools Block headroom to fund the Resilience Coaches from January 2021 for 12 months.
- Members agreed to receive a report after the initial 12 month period to consider the continuation of the funding subject to evaluation of the ongoing effectiveness of the Moving On Up programme.

9 SCHOOL AND EARLY YEARS FUNDING UPDATE

Hilary Wood, Head of Business Support and Resources presented the report on the latest developments relevant to Blackpool's Schools Funding Formula. It was reported that the Department for Education had released details for the Schools Formula for 2021/22. The majority of the factors in the National Funding Formula would increase by 3% although the free school meals factor would be increased by an inflation rate of 2.2%. It was reported that the Income Deprivation Affecting Children index would change which may favour more deprived areas including Blackpool.

In relation to Early Years funding, it was noted that nursery numbers were expected to be lower than usual due to Covid-19 therefore the Department for Education had announced that the local authority funding for September to December 2020 would be based on the January 2020 census information. Local authorities were expected to fund Early Years settings at the same level as in the autumn term 2019 if their numbers were lower than they were in autumn 2020.

There were no questions following the report.

10 UPDATE OF SCHEME FOR FINANCING BLACKPOOL SCHOOLS

Hilary Wood, Head of Business Support and Resources presented the report to update on the latest changes to the Department for Education guidance which were expected to be reflected in Blackpool's Scheme for Financing Schools. Members representing maintained schools were asked to approve the revisions for incorporation into Blackpool's Scheme for Financing Schools.

The guidance indicated that Schools must submit a recovery plan to the local authority when their revenue deficit rises above 5% at 31 March each year. It was recognised that the local authority preferred to set a lower threshold than 5% and requested to maintain the current process that a school should submit a recovery plan for any level of deficit to enable early support to be provided.

The Members representing maintained schools approved the revisions for incorporation into Blackpool's Scheme for Financing Schools as outlined.

MINUTES OF SCHOOLS FORUM MEETING - TUESDAY, 13 OCTOBER 2020

Resolved:

- **The Members representing maintained schools approved the revisions for incorporation into Blackpool's Scheme for Financing Schools as outlined.**

11 TRADE UNION DUTIES

Hilary Wood, Head of Business Support and Resources presented the report to request approval of the proposal for the use of accumulated reserves relating to union duties. Forum members were asked to approve the use of the accumulated union duty reserves, including the incorporation of Unison in the funding arrangements for union duties with effect from 1 January 2021.

It was noted that the information presented was based on the discussion held at the last Schools Forum meeting in July 2020 where reserves of £48,746 were reported to have accumulated in relation to union duties.

It was reported that historically, only the Teaching Associations had been included in the arrangements with requests from Unison for inclusion not being previously supported. It was noted that in consultation with other North West local authorities, of the 17 respondents, 12 had collective service offer and de-delegation arrangements in place that covered non-teaching as well as teaching unions.

It was recognised that the issue had been discussed at the Joint Union Meeting and members there were in support of the changes to include Unison.

Members were asked to agree to the recommendations in the report and indicate their preference for either Proposal A or Proposal B as highlighted. The main differences between the two proposals were considered.

Members agreed to approve the use of the accumulated union duty reserves, including the incorporation of Unison in the funding arrangements for union duties with effect from 1 January 2021 but wanted to consult with Headteachers on their preference for Proposal A or B. Amanda Baines and Neil Adams did not vote on this item owing to declarations of interest outlined at item 2.

Resolved:

- **Members approved the use of the accumulated union duty reserves, including the incorporation of Unison in the funding arrangements for union duties with effect from 1 January 2021.**
- **Members agreed that Headteachers should be consulted on their preference for proposal A or B to be supported.**
- **Danielle Bowater to email out to Headteachers to consult on preference of Proposal A or B.**

12 CATCH UP FUNDING

Hilary Wood, Head of Business Support and Resources presented the report to inform

MINUTES OF SCHOOLS FORUM MEETING - TUESDAY, 13 OCTOBER 2020

Schools Forum members of government Catch Up funding allocated to support the 2020/21 academic year disruption due to Covid-19.

The summary had been collated from information published by the Department for Education and indicated how the catch up premium would be allocated. It was noted that the £650m one off universal catch up premium allocated to mainstream schools equated to £80 per child up to year 11 and £240 per commissioned place for special schools and alternative provision. There was also £350m for targeted support through the National Tutoring Programme.

It was acknowledged that the £55m year 7 catch up premium to support those leaving key stage 2 had been discontinued as the government indicated that the funding was allocated through the national funding formula allocations.

The report was noted.

13 DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting was agreed as Tuesday 12 January 2021 at 9.15am.

Chairman

(The meeting ended 10.33am)

Any queries regarding these minutes, please contact:
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