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MINUTES OF SCHOOLS FORUM MEETING - TUESDAY, 14 JANUARY 2020

Present:

Primary School Head Teachers/Representative

Ms J Hirst, Bispham Endowed
Dr E Allen, St John Vianney

Primary School Governor Representative

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

Special School Maintained Representative

Ms K Haworth, Woodlands

Special School Academy Representative

Ms S Fielder, Chair of Governors, Park Community Academy

Academy School Representatives

Mr S Brennand, Unity
Mr R Farley, Westminster
Mr A Hussain for Ms A Bailey, Highfield (Star Academies)
Ms T Harrison, Thames
Ms J Heywood, Revoe
Mr D Logan, Roseacre (Achievement Through Collaboration)
Mr D Medcalf, St Georges
Mr E Vitalis, Marton / South Shore (Bright Futures)

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:

Ms N Dennison, Public Health Specialist
Mr M Golden, Finance Manager
Mr P Sharples, School Funding and Private Finance Initiative 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)

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1 WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS AND APOLOGIES

Hilary Wood, Head of Business Support, opened the meeting where introductions were made and apologies for absence were received from Councillor Kath Benson, Cabinet Member for Schools, Education and Aspiration and Amanda Bailey, Highfield (Star Academies).

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were noted.

3 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

The Forum considered the election of a Chairman of the Schools Forum until January 2021.

Resolved:

- **The Forum elected Jo Hirst as Chairman of the Schools Forum until January 2021.**

4 ELECTION OF VICE CHAIRMAN

Having been elected, Jo Hirst took the role of Chair from this point of the meeting. The Forum considered the election of a Vice Chairman of the Schools Forum until January 2021.

Resolved:

- **The Forum elected Roger Farley as Vice Chairman of the Schools Forum until January 2021.**

5 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

(Janice Heywood and Dean Logan arrived at the meeting)

The minutes of the Schools Forum held on 9 October 2019 were agreed as a correct record of the meeting pending the correction of the spelling of Susan Fielder in the attendance list.

Matters arising from the minutes were noted:

Item 3: Children's Centre update - Jo Hirst attended the meeting relating to Children's Centre staff. It was noted that an update on finances would be available at the March 2020 Schools Forum meeting.

Item 7: High Needs update –information relating to deficit recovery plans from other authorities was presented in the update at item 8.

Item 8: Illuminate Funding – an updated Protocol would be reissued on the Illuminate Funding and finances distributed to schools following this.

Item 9: To provide an update on the proposal for special educational needs provision to be available on mainstream sites – the process had been on hold but would be progressed prior

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to the March 2020 Schools Forum meeting.

Item 11: Extending the Academies risk protection arrangements to local authority maintained schools – no further updates had been received following the consultation, Paul Sharples would refer to the Department for Education website for any updates.

6 PUBLIC HEALTH UPDATE

Nicky Dennison, Public Health Specialist provided an update including the Holiday Activity Programme and a Personal, Social and Health Education update.

It was noted that the holiday provision had been successful and the Holiday Activity Partnership was looking at how the scheme could be sustainable for all school holidays. A bid to fund a similar scheme across ten areas of the town for the Summer 2020 period had been submitted with the outcome expected in February 2020.

It was reported that all schools had been offered a package of free support in preparation for Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education becoming statutory from September 2020 and 41 out of 44 schools had engaged with some or all of the offer. In response to a question, it was noted that the remaining three schools had made their own arrangements to prepare for the statutory requirements.

In addition to the report, Nicky Dennison indicated that there would be free training from Public Health for professionals to address tobacco use by young people and the details would be circulated to Headteachers for information.

Nicky Dennison further reported that Trading Standards were undertaking some work in relation to e-cigarettes and vaping and were looking for information from teachers to assist with this project.

Finally, it was noted that the school nurse provision would be reviewed and questionnaires would be circulated in order to gain views and opinions to inform the review process.

Resolved:

- **To circulate the Public Health report and the additional information on tobacco, trading standards and the school nurse review to headteachers for information.**

7 LOCAL AUTHORITY AND INCLUSION UPDATE

Paul Turner, Head of School Standards, Safeguarding and Inclusion provided an update and it was agreed that the report would be shared with Headteachers for information. It was recognised that there had been a number of inspections conducted by Ofsted across schools in the town. Of those receiving a 'good and declining' outcome, it was noted that although they were observed as 'good', an additional inspection visit would be made to monitor the progress.

It was also reported that a number of moderators had been trained to allow them to

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moderate assessments at key stage one and two.

With regards to inclusion, it was noted that more data would be available at the March 2020 meeting. A revised Attendance Strategy was in development and some recommendations would be presented to the Schools Forum in March 2020.

An update was provided on the Inclusion Project within secondary schools. Funding of £120,000 per setting would be provided to establish a continuum of provision to support high needs pupils, improve inclusion and reduce permanent exclusions. The project would be funded by the Opportunity Area fund, a contribution from the Local Authority budget and also devolution of funds from the High Needs block. Further clarification and assurances had been sought by Schools Forum at the previous meeting on the scope and plans attached to the project prior to the Schools Forum proportion of funds being released. Paul Turner advised that the contracts for the project had been issued and signed and schools had agreed to a framework. To gain both assurances and accountability in relation to the project, it would be monitored by the Department for Education with further monitoring of the process by Blackpool Council School Standards Team through BERA and the associated Steering Group.

As outlined at the Schools Forum meeting in October 2019, Members supported the implementation of the project but highlighted some areas that had not been undertaken well in the consultation process. It was acknowledged that there was a drive for sustainable change in relation to inclusion and for schools to retain responsibility for pupils. It was recognised that this was the first time that schools had agreed to collaborate on inclusion and lead a new system. It was anticipated that as a result of a successful project, a reduction on the High Needs budget spend would be seen. Due to the timeline of receipt of the Project proposal (July 2019) and the Schools Forum meeting (October 2019), Schools Forum were consulted on the Project at the earliest opportunity following the initial proposal.

Schools Forum sought some further information on the Project and it was agreed that the Chair would invite Stephen Tierney to the next Schools Forum meeting as he was overseeing the project for the Department for Education. It was agreed that some questions would be prepared and sent to Stephen Tierney prior to the meeting to enable him to provide responses.

It was also acknowledged that there should be lessons learned from this process in relation to both consulting Schools Forum members and information sharing in a more timely way for future projects.

It was suggested that the next report on the Inclusion Project could include the two options: an outline of the anticipated outcomes to proceed with the project; the anticipated outcome to cease the project, and the resulting impact on Inclusion in Blackpool schools with both options.

Resolved:

- **That Schools Forum support the process of the Inclusion Project.**
- **To ask Stephen Tierney as Project Lead to present an overview of the Inclusion**

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Project to the next Schools Forum meeting in March 2020.

- **To develop a list of questions on the Inclusion Project beforehand to be emailed to Stephen Tierney prior to the meeting.**
- **Timeliness of the consultation and information sharing be considered for any future projects where Schools Forum are required to support use of funding.**
- **To share the Local Authority and Inclusion update report with Headteachers for information.**

8 HIGH NEEDS UPDATE

Hilary Wood, Head of Business Support and Resources provided an overview of the latest developments relevant to the High Needs Budget. It was reported that the funding for High Needs had increase by 13% on the 2019-20 allocation amounting to £2.78million.

The medium term plan had been revised and also extended to cover a five year period given that the deficit recovery plan would be likely to extend beyond three years. It was reported that the in-year overspend on the High Needs Block for 2019-20 had worsened from £2million to £2.3million. Due to the increasing upward trend in pupil numbers in special schools and Out of Borough placements costs, using these assumptions the cumulative deficit against the Dedicated Schools Grant would reach £3.8million by the end of 2024-25. New and alternative ways to reduce spending in certain areas were sought.

The High Needs Action Plan would be presented to the Schools Forum in March 2020 with updates on progress.

It was reported that due to the size of the forecast deficit at 31 March 2020, should the rules remain unchanged, Blackpool would be required to submit a deficit recovery plan to the Department for Education. It was noted that last year 32 local authorities submitted deficit recovery plans as their deficit exceeded 1% of their total Dedicated Schools Grant allocation. The Department for Education had provided guidance of a 'good plan'.

It was reported that the Lotus Special School was due to open in September 2020 and would provide 48 places for 10 to 16 year olds with social, emotional and mental health needs. The provision would provide cost effective local provision and avoid the more expensive out of borough placements.

Phil Thompson reported that a consultation would be issued on how schools could support placements of children with education, health and care plans within Blackpool mainstream schools.

In response to a question it was noted that a rise in special school top-up funding was due to a review of banding payments and backdated payment of these.

The report was noted.

Resolved:

- **High Needs Action Plan would be presented to the Schools Forum in March 2020**

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with updates on progress.

9 DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT BUDGET MONITORING 2019/20

Mark Golden, Finance Manager, provided a report on the budget position of the 2019-20 Dedicated Schools Grant and reserves as at 30 November 2019.

Since the budget was set, the mainstream top-up funding had increased and there was a larger than expected increase in the number of Out of Borough placements and Special School numbers. The forecast gap on the Dedicated Schools Grant in 2019-20 had increased from £1.207million to £2.144million. The forecast Dedicated Schools Grant deficit stood at £2.561million by 31 March 2020. It was noted that a line of alternative provision had been included of £157,000 relating to the continuum of provision.

In response to a query, it was anticipated that the debt recovery plan would be required by June 2020.

The report was noted.

10 SCHOOLS FUNDING FORMULA 2020/21 PROPOSALS

Paul Sharples, School Funding and Private Finance Initiative Manager, presented the local authority's proposal for the allocation of the schools funding formula for 2020-21.

Following discussion regarding a possible transfer of funding from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block, it was suggested that there should be a robust debt recovery plan and there should be more communication with schools on this. It was recognised that the school budget was still on a soft formula and the circumstances would change should a hard formula be introduced.

It was suggested that consultation on a radical course of action on the budget be viewed in March 2020 including a plan on how to train staff to support high needs. Further information would also be presented to the headteachers meeting.

Following discussion, Schools Forum members agreed to the recommendations to continue to apply the National Funding Formula unit values; to set a minimum funding guarantee of 1.84% compared to 2019-20 per pupil funding; to set no cap on gains in line with local formula consultation responses; to set aside surplus growth funding allocation of £180,000 in a growth fund contingency and to transfer the £101,000 headroom from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block.

Resolved:

- **To continue to apply the National Funding Formula unit values.**
- **To set a minimum funding guarantee of 1.84% compared to 2019-20 per pupil funding.**
- **To set no cap on gains in line with local formula consultation responses.**
- **To set aside surplus growth funding allocation of £180,000 in a growth fund**

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contingency.

- **To transfer the £101,000 headroom from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block.**

11 DRAFT 2020/21 DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT BUDGET PROPOSAL

Hilary Wood, Head of Business Support and Resources, provided a report to share the provisional estimates for the use of Dedicated School Grant in 2020-21.

It was noted that the Schools Block funding had increased by £5.7million (almost 7%) and Central Schools Services block had decreased by £183,000. The High Needs budget forecast had increased by almost £2million and work would be undertaken to identify options for additional savings to consider at the next meeting. It was proposed that the Early Years Block funding was fully allocated to Early Years provision and services. The reduction in the block was a result of reduced participation levels although an increase of 1.84% in the hourly funding rate had been given (8 pence per child per hour). A small amount of savings in the Early Years central budget had been identified and a consultation with early years providers was underway to determine how the funds should be re-allocated.

It was estimated that the in-year deficit on the Dedicated Schools Grant would be £680,000 with a cumulative deficit at 31 March 2020 of £2,615,000.

It was noted that the budget proposal would be further discussed at the March 2020 Schools Forum meeting.

Resolved:

- **The budget proposal would be further discussed at the March 2020 Schools Forum meeting.**

(Simon Brennand and Edward Vitalis left the meeting)

12 DE-DELEGATION OF SERVICES AND RETENTION OF FUNDING FOR EDUCATION FUNCTIONS 2020/21

Paul Sharples, School Funding and Private Finance Initiative Manager, provided a report to seek approval for the continued de-delegation of services and the retention of funding for Education Functions.

In relation to Union duties, the Unison representative sought clarification on previous funding consultation between Unison and Schools Forum and it was agreed that Paul Sharples would share the information. It was also requested that the balance relating to the fund for union duties be presented at the next meeting for information.

Following a vote, the mainstream primary members agreed to the continued de-delegation of funding for free school meal eligibility checks.

Following a vote, the mainstream primary members agreed to the continued de-delegation of funding for Professional Teaching Association (PTA) union duties at £4.00 per pupil.

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Following a vote, the mainstream school members, including primary, special and pupil referral unit members, agreed to the amount of £35.33 per pupil being retained from school budgets for the purpose of funding education functions.

Resolved:

- **The mainstream primary members agreed to the continued de-delegation of funding for free school meal eligibility checks.**
- **The mainstream primary members agreed to the continued de-delegation of funding for Professional Teaching Association (PTA) union duties at £4.00 per pupil.**
- **The mainstream school members including primary, special and pupil referral unit members agreed to the amount of £35.33 per pupil being retained from school budgets for the purpose of funding education functions.**
- **That the balance relating to the fund for union duties be presented at the next meeting for information.**

13 DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

The Forum noted the date of the next meeting as Tuesday 10 March 2020 at 9.15am, @thegrange, Bathurst Avenue, Blackpool, FY3 7RW.

Chairman

(The meeting ended 12.15pm)

Any queries regarding these minutes, please contact:

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