

## Minutes of the Schools Forum

30 November 2017

-: Present :-

**Roger Hughes** (Chairman), **Mike Lock** (Vice Chair) **Adam Morris** (Primary Maintained Head), **Stewart Biddles** (Primary Academy Head), **Maurice Codd** (Primary Maintained Gov), **Daneian Rees** (Secondary Maintained Rep), **Lindsey Kings** (Secondary Academy Deputy Head), **Lisa Finn** (Secondary Academy Rep) **Clive Star** (Secondary Academy Gov) **Jan Chopping** (Secondary Academy Gov), **Dan Hallam** (Post 16), **Steven Hulme** (PRU Head)

**Andy Dempsey** (Director Of Children's Services ), **Rachael Williams** (Head of Education, Learning and Skills), **Martin Phillips** (Head of Finance), **Rob Parr** (Principal Accountant) and **Michael Freeman** (Clerk)

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### 1. Apologies/Changes to Membership

Apologies were received from Jim Piper.

Rachael Williams, head of Education, Learning & Skills, is currently consulting with Early Years settings to source representatives. Settings have asked if an additional rep could attend Forum in a shadowing capacity, this decision was put to vote. Members voted as follows:

**Yes: 12**

**No : 0**

An additional Primary Governor representative is still being sought.

**Action – RW to continue speaking with Early Years Settings.**

**Action – MF to liaise with Debbie Horn re Primary Governor Rep**

### 2. Minutes of the last meeting

Minutes of the last meeting held 12<sup>th</sup> October 2017 were agreed by members as a true and accurate record.

### 3. Matters arising

From last meeting:

Item 6, Annual Report on High Cost Placements. Meeting has been deferred until January, therefore RW will now feedback to members at January Forum.

#### 4. Delegation of Services

Rob Parr, Principal Accountant, presented to members options on De-Delegation and Centrally Retained Decisions for 2018/19. The option of maintained schools de-delegating budgets, allowing the Local Authority to hold the budgets rather than individual schools, was put to the vote. Votes were held separately for the Primary and Secondary sectors:

To allow maintained schools to de-delegate:

**Primary: 3 Yes (unanimous), 0 no, 0 abstaining**  
**Secondary: 1 yes (unanimous) 0 no, 0 abstaining.**

Members feel that this arrangement is beneficial to all, and are happy to continue with this for the next financial year.

The second item for discussion was on Centrally Retained Budgets. Figures for each budget area were shared with members, who were then asked to vote. This vote was open to both academy and maintained school members of the Forum:

To approve Centrally Retained Budgets:

**12 yes (unanimous), 0 no, 0 abstaining**

#### 5. Financial Report

Rachael Williams presented a detailed breakdown of the current financial position. The DSG is currently forecast to overspend by £1.122m, with main budget pressures continuing to be the Early Years Block, Independent special school fees and the Higher Needs Block.

Pressures in the Early Years Block centre on the 30 hours funding uptake, with a larger number of children (530) eligible than the DfE funded for (300). It is recognised that this is based on a national formula, and individual LAs have no influence in determining this, but members sought clarification from the DfE on the reasons for the large funding differential.

Pressures in the Higher Needs Block are down to the large increase in the number of Requests for Statutory Assessments (RSAs) in Torbay, much higher than the national average. Members expressed concerns that these pressures remain, despite the decision taken by Schools Forum to vire money into this block, and are concerned at what impact they are having.

**Action – RW to ask DfE for written response to Early Years Funding issues, and report back to next Forum in January.**

**Action – RW to monitor uptake of 30 hours offer on a termly basis.**

## 6. Higher Needs recovery plan

Andy Dempsey, Director of Children's Services, shared with members the Local Authority's gratitude on their decision of virement, as agreed at the previous Schools Forum. It was recognised that Disapplication would not have been credible at this time, and a proposal to carry over budget pressure into 2018/19 was discussed.

The number of RSAs in Torbay are increasing, creating a significant pressure on the Higher Needs Block of the DSG. With the average age of children on EHCPs also getting younger each year, member queried whether Health colleagues could be more involved in the RSA process, to ensure that children are being diagnosed correctly.

It was felt that greater analysis of the problem was required, and a Working Party will be set up to address this in greater detail.

**Action – AD & RW to establish working party, circulate Terms of Reference and distribute to forum members before next meeting. (MF to add this to January's agenda).**

**Action – AD & RW to collaborate with Health Colleagues, seeking greater contribution towards the RSA process.**

## 7. Vulnerable Pupils Project

Forum members were informed that a Head of Service for Vulnerable Pupils has now been appointed. Dan Hamer is a former teacher with experience of both Special Educational Needs and financial sectors. It is anticipated that Dan will be joining the LA on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018, although negotiations are currently underway to bring the start date forward.

Analysis of Permanent and Fixed Term Exclusions was then presented to the Forum, it is hoped that this new appointment will address these rising numbers, and look into the sustainability of alternative provisions currently being used. Members requested further details on the number of successful managed moves in future.

## 8. Funding and Resources meeting

As agreed at Schools Forum held 12<sup>th</sup> October, a Funding and Resources working party was established to discuss the best approach towards the National Fair Funding Formula, which takes effect in 2020. In order to determine this, colleagues in the Finance team were asked to model various options.

After discussion, it was felt that a 3 year approach using transitional steps toward the National Funding Formula would be the best approach, reducing the impact that a more fast-track approach would have on schools. Members were in agreement

that this transitional approach was the best option, but would wish to highlight that the increase in funding would still not be enough.

It was agreed that a full consultation will go out to schools once a transitional strategy has been using up to date figures collated from this years data.

**Action – RP Circulate to all schools an explanation of guidance.**

**Action – RP to collate figures using this years data before next Forum meeting in January.**

## **9. Autism project report**

Members received case studies from every school involved in the Autism project, detailing the impacts that the Autism Champions have had since the project began. It is acknowledged that the success of the project has led to a decrease in the number of autistic children going through the EHCP process.

Members were keen that the success of the project should be shared with colleagues.

Funding from Schools Forum for this project stops in December, therefore there will be no further updates at future meetings.

**Action – RW to send case studies to SEND networks.**

## **10. TESS report**

A report on the progress of the Torbay Education Safeguarding Service (TESS) was shared with members, which contained evaluations from schools on the effectiveness of the service. Feedback from schools has been very positive.

TESS funding is guaranteed until Aug 2018, however discussions around the continuation of funding are ongoing. As Schools Forum no longer contributes to the funding, there will be no further updates at future meetings.

## **11. IOSS report**

Data from the Intensive Outreach Support Service (IOSS) was shared with the forum, detailing the impact of the service. It is clear that there has been a reduction in the behaviour threshold for the majority of children supported by IOSS, which in turn has limited the number of children being permanently excluded.

Schools Forum will continue to receive updates from the service despite no longer funding the project, given the impact it has on reducing the demands of the Higher Needs Block of the DSG.

## **12. Report on Audit of Schools Forum**

The Forum welcomed Chloe Byrne, from the Devon Audit Partnership, who shared her findings from an audit of Schools Forum undertaken at the meeting held 29<sup>th</sup> June 2017.

Issues raised included a need for a Terms of Reference, defining the purpose and structure of the Forum, and the need to make the Forum more visible to non-members by making it more pronounced on the LA website. It was also felt that minutes may not be accurately reflecting the contents of meetings.

**Action – RW and RH to draft a written response to the audits findings on behalf of members.**

**Action – MF to circulate future meeting agendas and minutes to all Torbay Head Teachers.**

## **13. Items for next meeting**

- Updated Financial Report
- Higher needs recovery plan
- Written report from Funding and Resources.
- Response to audit of Schools Forum
- Update on work with Plymouth partnership.

## **14. Future meeting dates**

- Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> January 2018, 09:00 Mezzanine 3, Tor Hill House
- Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> March 2018, 09:00 Mezzanine 3, Tor Hill House