

Minutes of the Schools Forum 18 January 2018

-: Present :-

Roger Hughes (Chairman), **Mike Lock** (Vice Chair), **Adam Morris** (Primary Maintained Head), **Maurice Codd** (Primary Maintained Gov), **Claire Shiers** (Primary Academy Representative –Replacement for Stewart Biddles), **Danieian Rees** (Secondary Maintained Rep), **Lindsey Kings** (Secondary Academy Deputy Head), **Lisa Finn** (Secondary Academy Rep), **Julie Chubb** (Secondary Academy Gov Rep, Replacement for Clive Star), **Jan Chopping** (Secondary Academy Gov), **Dan Hallam** (Post 16)

Andy Dempsey (Director of Children’s Services), **Rachael Williams** (Head of Education, Learning & Skills), **Dan Hamer** (Head of Vulnerable Pupils) **Rob Parr** (Principal Accountant) and **Michael Freeman** (Clerk)

1. Apologies/Changes to Membership

Apologies were received from Martin Phillips and Jim Piper. Julie Chubb attended in place of Clive Starr, and Claire Shiers attended in place of Stewart Biddles. The Forum welcomed Dan Hamer, Head of Vulnerable Pupils, to his first meeting.

2. Minutes of the last meeting

Minutes were agreed as a true record of the meeting. However, members requested a greater level of detail in the recording of minutes, as it is felt that the wider constituency of schools not present at the meeting would need a full appreciation of the items discussed detailed and as such these should be minuted with greater clarity.

3. Matters arising

Proposed meeting dates were discussed by members. It is felt that there is too big a gap between the March and July meetings, the proposal to bring July’s meeting forward to the 14th June was agreed by all.

Representatives from both the Early Years sector and a Primary Governor are still being sought. It is anticipated that an Early Years rep will be in place before the March Forum.

Update from Funding and Resources meeting, Item 8 of November minutes – A full consultation has not gone out to schools, recommendations from the meeting will be discussed in item 6 of today’s agenda. Members requested that schools will be

given the complete rationale when the consultation goes out, i.e. not just the figures but the reasoning behind them.

Update from Item 12 of Novembers agenda, Report on Audit – Minutes of Forums are now circulated to all Headteachers, it has been requested that Heads circulate these to Governors when possible.

4. Financial Report

Members were shown a detailed breakdown of the Local Area's current financial position. The outturn position remains fairly static, due to the short time period since the last meeting. DSG funded activities are currently forecast to overspend by £1.271m. However, the decision of Forum to vire £364K from next year's funding will reduce this figure.

The two greatest pressures continue to be from the Early Years and the Higher Needs Blocks. Limited information on the Early Years Block is available, due to a census taking place at present, however the overspend has been reduced by £30k. Rachael Williams is currently in discussion with the DfE and other local authorities, and making representation to the DfE on the benefit of moving to a termly census of Early Years data. The outcomes of a meeting to be held on 1st March with the DfE will be discussed at the next Forum.

Budget pressure on the Higher Needs block is projected at £1.136m. This is largely due to the continued growth of Requests for Statutory Assessments, with a further 80 currently in process, and the demand for specialist school placements. The Higher Needs Recovery Group will continue to work on next year's projections. The Forum notes the work of the SEN team in ceasing a number of plans where pupils are no longer engaging, and the small savings made as a result of this. Work is also ongoing on permanent exclusion procedures. Dan Hamer, Head of Vulnerable Pupils, will now be taking a lead on this.

Reserve funds are unchanged from October 2017.

DSG allocations for this year and next were shown to members, it was noted that an increase in funding for the schools block of £2.380m would help to achieve a more equitable funding position.

Members noted the current financial position and agree to continue to work with the Local Authority on finding a solution for the projected overspend. It is requested that more detail is provided on overspend, as Governors/Heads outside of the Forum won't know why figures are so high.

- Action – Dan Hamer to report to March Forum on Excluded pupils.**
- Action – Rachael Williams to ask for written confirmation from DfE on Early Years Census plans.**

Action – Rob Parr to provide further details on overspend, and to update budget table with additional column showing actual spend.

5. Higher Needs Recovery plan

As agreed at November Forum, a Working Party for the Higher Needs Financial Recovery Plan will be established. Members were asked to comment on a draft Terms of Reference, which outlines the proposed remit of the Working Party.

Membership of the Working party will be amended to include one Post 16 Representative, and three SEND steering group representatives (one each from the Primary, Secondary and Early Years sectors). It was also felt that the representative for Health should be a senior colleague.

With regards to the charring arrangements, Members wished to clarify that an elected Chairperson must come from the education sector and be elected at the first meeting.

Action - Terms of Reference will be updated to reflect today's discussion.

Action – Rachael Williams to seek representatives and propose meeting dates.

Action – Rachael Williams & Andy Dempsey to contact Simon Tapley (CCG) to request senior health colleague involvement.

6. Response to National Fair Funding Task and Finish Group

As a result of discussions at previous Schools Forum, a task and finish group have met to model the formula used to allocate DSG from 2018/19 and 2019/20.

Using up to date census data, the model achieves the minimum funding levels per pupil by scaling factors each year, with a view to moving to the Hard Implementation by 2020/21. The model proposes that Secondary schools will adopt the NFF Age Weighted Pupil Units (AWPU) from the outset, whilst for Primary schools it will reduce year by year.

Vote – that Forum adopts the model proposed by working party with amendments agreed today:

In Favour: 10

Against: 0

Abstain: 1

Members were in agreement that this model be shared with schools immediately. It is felt that this represents a good outcome in very difficult circumstances, but recognise ongoing problems.

Roger Hughes, Chair, requested that an additional breakdown of the Formula for 2020/21, showing the adoption of the Hard Formula, be included on future reports.

Members noted that no formula has been modelled for Specialist provisions as yet, this is due to a lack of information available nationally at present.

Action – Finance colleagues to include 2020/21 formula on future reports.

7. Feedback on individual child placements

As requested at a previous Forum, Rachael Williams shared with members a deeper analysis of joint funded placements. It is recognised that work being done by education staff in attending permanency panels and tracker meetings have led to a reduction in the contributions from Education.

The Forum notes the findings of the report, and requests that updates are presented to forum on a half yearly basis, as well as sharing the report at the Higher Needs recovery group.

Action – Rachael Williams to share analysis with Higher Needs recovery group.

8. Schools Forum Operation and Good Practice Guide September 2017

The latest version of the Schools Forum Good Practice Guide was discussed by members. To comply with recommendations made in the guide, it was agreed to include contact details for both Roger Hughes, as Chair, and Rachael Williams, as Head of Education, to future agendas and minutes, and to compile an up to date list of members contact details, to be circulated to all members.

Action – Mike Freeman to add Roger Hughes and Rachael Williams contact details to future agendas and minutes.

Action – Mike Freeman to update Members contact details, and circulate to all members.

9. Response to Audit

A response written by the head of Education and Schools Forum Chair, on behalf of members to the audit of Schools Forum, was discussed. The response takes into consideration members feelings that the meeting attended by Devon Audit

Partnership was perhaps not a true reflection of usual Forum meetings. It is felt that attendance at a variety of Forum meetings would better reflect the level of engagement of members.

Members note the findings of the audit, and agree with the Forums response.

Action – Mike Freeman and Rachael Williams to update Terms of Reference, updating members' roles and responsibilities.

Action – Mike Freeman to ensure that future minutes accurately reflect the detailed discussions held at meetings.

Action – Mike Freeman to update Schools Forum webpage, ensuring links are correct and all information is readily available.

Action - Mike Freeman to create an Audit Action Plan.

10. Plymouth Partnership

Andy Dempsey, Director of Children's Services, presented to Forum an update on the ongoing contractual partnership with Plymouth Children's Services. Some background to the decision making process was shared with members, including the decision to appoint John Coughlan, Chief Executive of Hampshire County Council, as Commissioner of Children's Service, to act in an advisory role for a period of 12 months.

There is currently a restructure of the Senior Leadership Team in Plymouth, but the partnership aims to be in place from 1st April. It is anticipated that there will be no changes to working in the immediate phase, however a new joint Director of Children's Services will be appointed by Plymouth.

Members raised a number of questions regarding the partnership. Some of these questions were not answered as it is not currently known how things will progress until the plans are developed. Key areas raised by Forum were the visibility of the DCS in the new arrangement, the governance arrangements of the partnership and the added benefit to the local area and education sector. Forum Members are committed to making this an effective partnership and want to ensure the education community plays an appropriate role in getting this off to a good and positive start. Whilst initial feedback from the commissioner has been very positive, members feel that it is important to articulate what the partnership model will look like moving forward, and would like more clarity on the advantages of the model.

Action – Andy Dempsey to speak to John Coughlan, and flag up the need for clarity.

Please note – this item was brought forward on the agenda, due to AD having to attend another meeting. This discussion took place after agenda item 6.

11. Items for next meeting

- Financial Report
- Recovery Plan
- High Cost Pupils Report (Every March and October)
- Update on ALFEY funds
- Permanent Exclusion Data, including recovery of funds from excluding schools (Every March and October)
- Post Audit Action Plan

12. Future meeting dates

- 8th March 2018, Mezzanine 3, Tor Hill House, 09:00
- 14th June 2018, Venue TBA
- 11th October 2018, Venue TBA
- 29th November 2018, Venue TBA
- 17th January 2019, Venue TBA
- 7th March 2019, Venue TBA