

Minutes of the Schools Forum

28th November 2019

-: Present :-

Stewart Biddles (Chairman), Primary Academy Head; **Lisa Finn (Vice-Chair)**, Secondary Academy Rep; **Maurice Codd**, Primary Maintained Governor; **Adam Morris**, Primary Maintained Head; **Ken Kies**, Primary Academy Head; **Tim Stephens**, Primary Academy Governor; **Lindsey Kings**, Secondary Academy Deputy Head; **Daneian Rees**, Secondary Academy Rep; **Sally Timmins**, Secondary Academy Rep; **Jim Piper**, Primary Academy Deputy Head; **Dan Hallam**, Post 16; **Mike Lock**, Special Schools Head; and **Jayne Jones**, Early Years Rep

Also in attendance: **Rachael Williams**, Assistant Director for Education, Learning and Skills; **Martin Phillips**, Head of Finance; **Rob Parr**, Principal Accountant; **Dan Hamer**, Head of Vulnerable Pupils; **Dorothy Hadleigh**, Head of SEN; **Hannah Spencer**, Senior SEN Officer; **Michael Freeman**, Clerk

1. Apologies/Changes to Membership

Apologies were received from Clive Star. The Forum welcomed Hannah Spencer, Senior SEN Officer, to her first meeting.

2. Minutes of the last meeting

Members read through the minutes from the meeting held 31st October, and agreed them as a true record. It was noted that the action of Item 4 of the minutes has not been actioned, as Plymouth colleagues are currently in a Joint Targeted Area Inspection and are unavailable for comment.

3. Matters arising

None

4. Standing Items

5. Financial Report

Rachael Williams, Assistant Director of Education, Learning and Skills, presented an updated financial report to members. The current Outturn position has increased

by £93k since October's meeting. Pressures in the system remain as before, in particular the Higher Needs block. Rachael informed members that figures for the EY block will be available once the census returns have been compiled in January. There has been no significant change to the Element Three top up funding, although it was noted that there is an improvement to the previous position of £7k. Rachael thanked the SEN team and the newly appointed EHCP monitoring officers for their hard work on this.

Recovery of funding from schools for excluded pupils, Medical Tuition Service and Elective Home Educated has been less than anticipated, however members were asked to note that this can be explained by less children coming out of the system, meaning the recharging mechanisms that the LA enacts have been reduced.

Members queried whether the current outturn position includes the provision of last year's virement. The report does include the £1.048m agreed.

Members note the findings of the report.

Rachael has written to the EFSA/DfE to request a meeting in order to support the DSG deficit recovery plan. It was felt that members of Schools Forum should be included in this meeting, and representatives were sought from each of the sectors (i.e. 1 Primary, 1 Secondary, 1 Early Years and 1 Special School representative). The following members volunteered to attend the meeting:

Tim Stephens / Adam Morris (Primary)
Sally Timmins (Secondary)
Jayne Jones (Early Years)
Mike Lock (Special Schools)

Provisional dates for this meeting are 22nd-24th January, Rachael will confirm this with the EFSA/DfE and update colleagues. Members requested that feedback from this meeting be shared at the next Forum on 25th January.

Action – Rachael to provide feedback from meeting with EFSA/DfE in January.

6. Funding Allocations for 2020/21

Rob Parr, Principal Accountant, shared with members the updated funding models for 2020/21 allocations, as requested at October's Schools Forum. Officers have used principles agreed by Schools Forum to model 4 options, with the aim of getting to the minimum pupil guarantees.

Members asked what the minimum per pupil amounts are, Rob explained that these figures are formula driven and are included in the individual tables modelled for each option.

As Forum have previously decided to agree to a virement of funds (from the Schools block to the Higher Needs block) the first model presented, based on no

virement of funds, was not an option, therefore a decision on the three remaining options was then required. Votes were as follows:

Option 1, assuming a minimum funding guarantee of 1.84% per pupil and a minimum per pupil amount of £3,750 for Primary and £5,000 for Secondary. AWPUP remains at NFF values, all other units values have a 2.70% reduction from NFF levels:

2 votes

Option 2, assuming a minimum funding guarantee of 1.84% per pupil and a minimum per pupil amount of £3,750 for Primary and £5,000 for Secondary. All unit values have a 0.75% reduction from NFF values, apart from the lump sum which has a 0.20% reduction:

6 votes

Option 3, assuming a minimum funding guarantee of 1.84% per pupil and a minimum per pupil amount of £3,750 for Primary and £5,000 for Secondary. AWPUP remains at NFF values, as does lump sum, all other unit values have had a 3.10% reduction from NFF levels:

0 votes

There were 4 abstentions.

Option 2 was approved by Forum.

Special Schools models were then shown to members, with Rob explaining that any increase to special schools budgets has to go through Pupil top up. 6 options were presented, with increments ranging from 2% up to 9.39%.

Mike Lock met with Special School heads on prior to this meeting, and circulated to Forum members a benchmarking report from EFSA, comparing Special Schools in Torbay with other schools of a similar type and highlighting the lack of funding when compared to neighbouring authorities. It was agreed by all that Special Schools do require more funding, and that bringing funding more in line with that received by mainstream schools is fair for everyone.

Members asked whether the LA has a view on these, it was explained whilst it is recognised that Special Schools incur the same costs as Primary and Secondary and do require an upshift in funding to meet these, It has been indicated by the EFSA that the £1.5m Higher Needs block be used against our deficit position. Preference would be for an increase of 4% (Option B), as this is in line the virement already agreed. Votes were as follows:

Option A, 2% increase from 19/20, 13.31% of £1.5m growth: 1 Vote

Option B, 4% increase from 19/20, 26.63% of £1.5m growth: 7 votes

Option C, 5% increase from 19/20, 33.28% of £1.5m growth: 4 votes.

There were no abstentions.

Option B was approved by Forum.

Debate then moved on to the Early Years Budget Allocation. It is expected that we will receive an additional £129k of funding into the Early Years Block. A full consultation will be undertaken with all providers within the Early Years sector on this. Before this begins, Members were asked to consider whether to continue to subsidise the ALFEY (Activity Led Funding in Early Years) budget from the Higher Needs block. In 2019/20 this equated to £100k. A vote was held as follows:

Does Schools Forum support the withdrawal of supplementing ALFEY funding from the Higher Needs block?

For: 0

Against: 12

Abstain: 0

Unanimous in favour of continuing to supplement Early Years funding.

Members recognised that early identification of these children through ALFEY mechanisms is essential, and that identifying children earlier in the system saves money in the long term. The LA will now begin a formal consultation with the Early Years sector on the budget allocation.

7. De-Delegation and Centrally Retained Items

Rachael explained to members that each year a decision needs to be taken on money that is de-delegated back to the local authority to conduct activities for our maintained schools. Two votes are required, firstly for maintained schools only, with the second vote open to all members.

De-delegations are the same as last year, for Free Schools Meals, Insurance, ELA children, Travellers Education and Rates. At the request of Schools Forum last year, Rachael explained that the Education functions are now available to schools to purchase individually, rather than having to de-delegate these back to the Local Authority.

Members asked what the Insurance element of the tables actually mean, Clarification is being sought from Insurance colleagues and members will be emailed an explanation once we have a response.

Votes were as follows:

For Maintained schools to de-delegate services for 2020/21 to the LA:

Primary: 2

Secondary: 1

Maintained members voted unanimously in favour of de-delegation.

The second part of the item was a vote on de-delegating centrally retained services for 19/20, and was open to all schools. Votes were taken separately on each of the Centrally Retained Services:

Item 1, Planned Pupil Growth, including the provision of a new Primary School in Paignton from September 2020:

For: 11

Against: 0

Abstain: 0

Unanimous

Item 2, Schools Admission Services, including the provision of one new admissions officer:

For: 11

Against: 0

Abstain: 0

Unanimous

Item 3, Servicing the Schools Forum:

For: 11

Against: 0

Abstain: 0

Unanimous

Item 4, Central Early Years Block provision, (5% retained):

For: 11

Against: 0

Abstain: 0

Unanimous.

8. Value for money - Post 16 report

Dorothy Hadleigh, Head of SEN, presented an update on the work of the SEN team in providing value for money with Post 16 providers.

It was noted that providers are now being subject to greater scrutiny, with greater evidence of the outcomes of young people now being provided. Issues around attendance are now being monitored more closely, with the SEN team able to cease funding if young people are not attending. New contracts with providers now include a list of all the expectations required of them to ensure these are being met.

Members were in agreement that this has been a really useful exercise, having bought a level of challenge that providers have not had before. It was noted that it is Dorothy's intention to extend these principles into mainstream provisions moving forward, with pathway plans beginning next year.

The Forum thanked Dorothy for the ongoing work of her and her team, and request that an update on this project in 2020.

Action – Dorothy to present an update to Schools Forum in 6 months' time.

9. Items for next meeting

- Update from meeting with EFSA.
- Meeting dates from the year 2020/21

10. Future meeting dates

- Thursday 23rd January 2020, 09:00, 4th Floor South, Tor Hill House
- Thursday 12th March 2020, 09:00, Mezzanine Room 4, Tor Hill House