

Minutes of the Schools Forum

14 June 2018

-: Present :-

Roger Hughes (Chair), **Mike Lock** (Vice Chair), **Steven Hulme** (PRU), **Jayne Jones** (Early Years Rep), **Adam Morris** (Primary Maintained Head), **Jim Piper** (Primary Academy Deputy Head), **Tim Stephens** (Primary Academy Governor), **Stewart Biddles** (Primary Academy Head), **Maurice Codd** (Primary Maintained Governor), **Lindsey Kings** (Secondary Academy Deputy Head), **Daneian Rees** (Secondary Maintained Rep), **Jan Chopping** (Secondary Academy Governor), **Dan Hallam** (post 16), **Jason Trevarthen** (Secondary Academy Rep –replacement for Lisa Finn)

Rachael Williams (Head of Education, Learning and Skills), **Dan Hamer** (Head of Vulnerable Pupils), **Rob Parr** (Principal Accountant), **Mike Freeman** (Clerk)

1. Apologies/Changes to Membership

Apologies were received from Andrew Dempsey, Director of Children's Services, and Clive Star, Secondary Academy Governor. Jason Trevarthen, Secondary Academy Deputy Head, attended in the absence of Lisa Finn.

2. Minutes of the last meeting

Minutes of the last meeting held Thursday 8th March 2018 were agreed as a true record.

3. Matters arising

From Item 4 of March's meeting, Rachael Williams, Head of Education, Learning & Skills, informed members that the authority's plans for the Early Years Census are still with the DfE, an update on this will be provided to members when available.

From Item 4 of March's meeting, a report from the Working Group set up to look at Special School Allocations has been brought to today's meeting.

4. Financial Report

Rachael Williams presented the latest financial position of the Local Authority. We are currently overspent on Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) activities by £983k. As

agreed by Forum members previously, a virement of funds from the Schools Block reduces budget pressure to £614k, but this position remains a significant concern.

The area of most pressure continues to be the Higher Needs Block, largely due to an increase in commissioned placements alongside an increase in Element 3 top up allocations. However, members were pleased to note that significant work from the Local Authority has seen spend on Joint Funded Placements being reduced to a budget position of £1k overspent.

An underspend of £293k in the Early Years Block has been used to offset last years overspend. However, members were advised to treat this figure with caution as we are unable to calculate recoupment figure until the DfE publishes the final adjustment figure, which is expected to be in July.

There is also an underspend of £131k in the Schools Commissioning Block, due to careful management of staffing budgets and fewer schools needing intervention funds. Members were also pleased to note that the LA has now recovered £150k of funding from excluded pupils, which is now in the budget.

Given the current financial position, and an early predicted pressure of £1.5m at 2018/19 year end, the Forum were asked to consider the following recommendations:

Recommendation 1: Schools Forum note the financial position and continue to work with the Local Authority through the mechanism of the Higher Needs Recovery Group to create a financial recovery plan.

Recommendation 2: Schools Forum consider the Officer Recommendation that the base funding for special schools returns to the national level (currently £10k) in 2019/20.

After discussion, Special School colleagues felt that we were not in a position to vote on this recommendation, giving the potential implications of making a virement application. Members were in agreement that further information is required before deciding on this.

To defer any decision on recommendation 2 until October Schools Forum:

Yes – 12

No – 0

Abstain - 1

APPROVED

Rachael Williams requested that Special Schools representatives communicate with colleagues the decision of Schools Forum, to bring back the item to October's meeting to ensure financial decisions are taken in this context

For further information on Schools Forum, please contact:

Roger Hughes, Chair, ecotaps@hotmail.com;

Rachael Williams, Head of Education, Learning & Skills, rachael.williams@torbay.gov.uk;

Michael Freeman, Clerk, michael.freeman@torbay.gov.uk

Recommendation 3: Schools Forum consider the recommendation to alter the base funding allocation for special schools going above commissioned numbers using a pro rata formula.

Yes – 14

No – 0

Abstain – 0

APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY

Members approved, but requested that a deeper discussion on the implications of going over commissioned pupil numbers should take place.

Recommendation 4: Schools Forum approve that Special Schools receive a 2% increase to finding allocations for pupil top ups, in line with mainstream schools.

Yes -13

No - 0

Abstain – 1

APPROVED

Members agreed to this recommendation, with a view to further discussion on the methodology of this at October Schools Forum.

5. Report and recommendations from Schools Forum working group

Please note that at the request of the Chair, this item was discussed prior to Item 4, Financial Report.

Mike Lock shared with members details from the Schools Forum Working Group, set up to discuss Special School Allocations. Head Teachers from the four Torbay Special Schools, along with Rob Parr, Principal Accountant, met to discuss how best to split the £204k allocation, as agreed at March Forum.

After modelling the impact that each option would have on budgets, the group were in agreement that the fairest way to split the allocation would be on a pro-rata basis, building the increase into the per pupil top-up bandings.

6. Higher Needs Recovery Group

Rachael Williams shared with members a report from the Higher Needs Recovery Group. The group has met twice since the last Forum, and after discussions on the management of pupil movements and business cases for both the Play Torbay project and an additional area based provision for six pupils currently out of area, the following recommendations were brought to Forum for discussion:

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1. To accept the business case for establishing an enhanced resource base to reintegrate children from out of area provisions. This would be managed by PCSA for Key Stage 3 students, at the Yalberton site.
2. To run a pilot programme with the Youth Trust/Play Torbay securing effective reintegration into mainstream settings from alternative provision. This programme would run from 9-12 weeks and be managed by Play Torbay. The students would benefit from a programme that includes support from parents and an offer outside term dates.
3. To adopt a proposal that all schools have an expectation that they will accept a limit of children on managed moves or reintegrating from alternative provision. There will be an agreed limit which is intended to ensure equity and clarify the places available to the Pupil Referral Panel under Fair Access. The proposed figure is 3% of the school role for each year based on the October school census.

These recommendations were discussed at the first Higher Needs Recovery Group meeting held on 19th April, and approved by members of Schools Forum in an email communication the following week. The following recommendations were discussed at this Forum:

4. To use the MFG as a mechanism for recoument of Permanent Exclusions.

Members recognised that there has been a cultural change in schools around exclusions, and felt that implementing this at the start of the next academic year would lead to a more inclusive approach because of the financial impact.

Yes – 13
 No – 0
 Abstain – 1
 APPROVED

5. To adopt a 'managed transfer' process to support the movement of pupils outside of admissions round.

Yes – 13
 No – 0
 Abstain – 1
 APPROVED

6. To task officers with creating a full business plan for the recovery of the higher needs deficit using a combined approach of limiting commissioned numbers at special schools and alternative provisions, reviewing Element 3 'top up' payments , and seeking a virement application via Schools Forum or a disapplication to the Secretary of

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State. The full business case would be presented to Schools Forum and if agreed would be consulted upon with the sector in September/October 2018.

Rachael Williams will be meeting with Finance Colleagues from Hampshire County Council to assist with capacity in writing this business case. This will be brought back to HNRG at the July meeting, then brought back to Schools Forum in October, after which a full consultation with all schools will then be held.

Yes – 14
No – 0
Abstain – 0
APPROVED

Given the importance of discussions being held at HNRG, members requested that minutes of these meetings be circulated when available, rather than being brought to future Schools Forums.

Action – HNRG minutes to be circulated to all Forum members as soon as possible.

7. IOSS Monitoring report

Members were shown a report by Sandra Wright, head of the Chestnut Centre, on the progress of the Intensive Outreach Support Service.

Members acknowledged the hard work of being done despite significant staffing issues, with four children and families being maintained in the area as a result of input from IOSS.

The next steps for the service will include a focus on Social, Emotional & Mental Health (SEMH) children. Rachael Williams advised the Forum that continuation of the service using Troubled Families funds will need to be considered as the budget is ceasing.

8. Elective Home Education

Rachael Williams shared with members an update on Elective Home Education. It was recognised that in line with national trends, the number of EHE children is increasing within Torbay. Currently there are 255 EHE children in Torbay, with no statutory duty to record these children on census data. Funding is not provided for them, having a huge financial impact on the Local Authority.

It was proposed that an additional EHE officer, employed by the LA, would help additional children and families accessing mainstream education. It was anticipated

that helping 12 children back to a mainstream offer would offset the cost of this post.

Recommendation:

That School Forum agree to fund an Elective Home Education Officer 1 x FTE on a one year contract at the cost of £46k per annum:

Yes – 11

No – 2

Abstain - 1

APPROVED

After voting, members were mindful of the timing of this appointment, with the impact of the position not expected to be felt until after the October 2019 Census.

9. Post Audit Action Plan

Members were shown an update of the Post Audit Action Plan, with the following tasks flagged as red or amber under discussion:

1.2.1 *To ensure that the minutes reflect the detailed discussions conducted at the meeting* – Members agreed that the minutes are increasingly detailed, and updated the status to green.

1.6.1 *The Forum is calling together a working party to develop and monitor a Recovery Plan for costs associated with High Needs Pupils* – Working party has been set up and is meeting regularly, leave status as amber as work is ongoing.

1.7.1 *The Higher Needs Recovery Group Terms of Reference will include the identification of good practice* – Status will remain as amber, as work on this is ongoing. Members requested that bench marking information be included in the Terms of Reference as well.

Action – MF to update Terms of Reference.

1.9.1 *Local Authority to provide a dedicated School Forum web page that is accessible and inclusive of all relevant information* – Status will remain amber, Officers will address this in the summer holiday.

10. Annual Review of School Representation

Current membership of the Schools Forum was looked at by Roger Hughes. As the ratio of Primary and Secondary members is currently in line with pupil numbers across Torbay, it was agreed by all to keep membership as it is.

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11. Items for next meeting

- Financial Report
- Higher Needs Recovery Group
- Audit Action Plan Group
- Report on High Cost Placements – Dorothy Hadleigh
- Discussion the possibility of special schools' allocations being reduced to 17/18 levels

12. Future meeting dates

- Thursday 11th October 2018, 09:00, Mezzanine Room 4, Tor Hill House
- Thursday 29th November 2018, 09:00, Mezzanine Room 4, Tor Hill House
- Thursday 17th January 2019, 09:00, Venue TBA
- Thursday 7th March 2019, 09:00, Venue TBA