

Minutes of the Schools Forum

10th January 2019
4th Floor South Meeting Room, Tor Hill House

-: Present :-

Roger Hughes (Chairman/Primary Maintained Head), **Mike Lock** (Vice-Chair/Special Schools), **Stewart Biddles** (Primary Academy Head), **Jim Piper** (Primary Academy Head), **Adam Morris** (Primary Maintained Head), **Tim Stephens** (Primary Academy Governor), **Maurice Codd** (Primary Maintained Governor), **Lindsey Kings** (Secondary Academy Deputy Head), **Peter Brown** (Secondary Academy Rep - Substitute for Daneian Rees), **Julie Chubb** (Secondary Academy Rep - Substitute for Clive Star), **Dan Hallam** (Post 16) and **Sally Timmins** (Secondary Academy Governor)

Rachael Williams (Assistant Director of Education, Learning & Skills), **Rob Parr** (Principal Accountant), and **Mike Freeman** (Clerk)

1. **Apologies/Changes to Membership**

Apologies were received from Jayne Jones. Peter Brown attended as substitute for Daneian Rees, and Jayne Chubb attended as substitute for Clive Star.

The Forum welcomed Sally Timmins, Secondary Academy Governor, to her first meeting.

2. **Minutes of the last meeting**

Minutes of the last meeting held 29th November 2018 were agreed as a true record.

3. **Matters arising**

None

4. **Future meeting dates**

After discussion, the proposed meeting dates for 2019/20 were approved. Please note, the meeting in November is Thursday 28th November.

Action – MF to book venues for meetings.

5. Financial Report

An updated financial report was shared with members by Rachael Williams, Assistant director, Education Learning & Skills, detailing the current outturn position. Overspend has continued to rise (approx. £21k since November's Forum) and now stands at £2.716m.

There is no update on the Early Years Block, as the January Census return is ongoing. An outturn position will be available at the March Forum. It was noted that there continues to be a high uptake of statutory offers within the Early Years sector.

There continues to be significant demand on the Higher Needs block, due in part to a continual increase in both parental RSAs (Requests for Statutory Assessments) School Requests and Post 16 cases. It was noted that requests for additional funding has also increased, having risen by £37k since November.

Actions recommended by the Higher Needs Recovery Group are now being implemented, and the work of the Secondary peer challenge group is beginning to take effect.

Members note the findings of the report, and agree to continue the work of the Higher Needs Recovery Group when considering the next steps. It was noted that the seriousness of the current position is being recognised by schools, and a change of culture to prevent future additional spending is starting to take effect.

6. DfE announcement of additional Higher Needs Funding

Following an announcement from the Education Secretary on 16th December 2018, additional funding for the Higher Needs block has been allocated to local authorities, which for Torbay works out at £268,221 for the years 2018/19 and £268,221 for 2019/20.

Because of this announcement, this paper has been brought to Forum at the request of the EFSA/DfE, to reconsider the virement application and respond before the deadline of 15th January.

The Forum debated the options presented to them by Rachael, with some expressing disappointment that the three options presented do not contain any monies going to Special Schools, despite the funding being released for that purpose. Despite acknowledging that overspending on Higher Needs pupils is largely responsible for the current financial deficit, it was felt by some that this additional funding should not be used to offset historical debt.

Other members made the point that other sectors such as Post 16 and Early Years have had no funding uplift at all, and that the size of the collective deficit should perhaps override any individual sectors interests.

Members queried how long we have to achieve a balanced budget, although there is no definite answer to this any Schools Forum in deficit will have to have a detailed recovery plan in place in the next two years.

With that in mind, a fourth option was proposed in addition to the three already given, whereby the additional funding should be split with 50% used to offset the forecast deficit and 50% allocated to Special Schools. This option was proposed as follows:

Option 4 – That additional funds for 2019/20 are allocated to the higher needs block to 50% (or up to 3% growth) to special schools and 50% to offset the forecast deficit.

Separate votes on the allocation of funds were held for each of the two years allocations.

Option 1 – the additional funds for 18/19 are allocated to the Higher Needs Block with a view to reduce the spending on Higher Needs:

Yes: 10

No: 1

Abstain: 1

It was felt that this was the best decision for the current year given the deficit position.

Before deciding on how the funds for 19/20 should be allocated, Rachael drew members attention to an update on Planned Pupil Growth for 2019/20, following conversations on secondary expansions with the Regional Schools Commissioner.

Please note that this was originally to be discussed under item 10 of the agenda, but given the ramifications that any decision made would have on the unallocated funding, it was decided to incorporate this item as part of the wider discussion.

After receiving the 2019/20 allocation for Pupil Growth, It was proposed to allocate an additional 30 places to both Paignton Community & Sports Academy and The Spires College, allowing the LA to work towards the recommended 5-7% surplus capacity. A single vote was held on both of the proposals as follows:

That Schools Forum agree to use Pupil Growth allocation to allocate an additional 30 places to both PCSA and Spires College:

Yes: 12

No: 0

Abstain: 0

This is expected to cost £349k out of an allocation of £567k, leaving £218k of Pupil Growth funding unallocated. Given this information, the decision on how to distribute this money then formed part of the wider debate on Higher Needs funding, with members querying whether 2019/20 allocation could now be used

elsewhere. Two options were presented to members, either increasing the minimum per pupil levels in the funding formula (Option A), or allocating the funds through the various drivers (Option B).

To use Option A to allocate the additional £218k from the Planned Pupil Growth funding:

Yes: 8

No: 1

Abstain: 3

As Option A was approved by members, Option B was not voted on.

Discussion then moved on to the 2019/20 additional allocation, with the three original options as well as option 4 debated at length. Option 1 was put to vote first:

The additional funds for 19/20 are allocated used to offset the overspend:

Yes: 3

No: 8

Abstain: 1

As this was not approved, the next decision was where to place the money, with the three remaining options voted on concurrently:

Option 2 – additional funds are taken off the virement application and allocated through the Schools Block: 4

Option 3 – Additional funds are both allocated to the Higher Needs Block and the Schools Block to offset the virement application on a 50/50 basis: 0

Option 4 - *That additional funds for 2019/20 are allocated to the higher needs block to 50% (or up to 3% growth) to special schools and 50% to offset the forecast deficit. : 7*

Abstain: 1

Members felt that, despite the size of the current deficit, the LA is at least acknowledging the problems being faced, and when compared with other LAs, are creating a sustainable plan to address recovery.

7. Report on outcomes of consultation

A report on the recent consultation was shared with members, with feedback from members of the public on the local area proposals for achieving and maintaining a balanced higher needs budget. There were 994 responses in total, with the majority in agreement that all students should be in receipt of minimum funding. Members noted the findings of this report.

8. Verbal update on progress with Higher Needs Recovery

Rachael gave an update to Forum on the work being done on Higher Needs recovery.

A Peer 2 Peer challenge group has now been established, Dan Hamer (Vulnerable Pupils Lead) is currently working with Primary schools on how to make the best use of this.

Karen Gannon will be conducting SEND audits in all schools, to look at providing training and information to Governors.

The working partnership with Plymouth is underway, with Plymouth colleagues now sitting on our RSA panel, and Torbay officers beginning audit work with Plymouth in return. Rachael now has a dedicated Project Officer working with her one day a week to take forward the commissioning places.

Officers are still awaiting the Governments Green Paper on Elective Home Education.

**Action - RW to provide written report at future forum
- RW to invite Devon Colleagues to attend High Needs Recovery Group, to talk about banding reviews**

9. Verbal update on next steps of IOSS

Rachael provided a brief update on the future of the IOSS (Intensive Outreach Support Service). At present funding for this service is due to cease on 31st March 2019. Members recognise the importance of the service, and the role it plays in reducing further significant demands on the Higher Needs block.

Action – Rachael to provide written report on future funding, for decision at March Forum

10. Planned Pupil Growth

Please note that in a change to the agenda running order this item was discussed at length as part of the wider discussion on additional Higher Needs funding (agenda item 6).

11. Education services for maintained schools

It has emerged that a decision made at November's Forum will need to be revisited, as a vote for the delegation of funds for maintained schools was incorrectly held separately for Primary and Secondary phases. In line with EFSA regulations, this vote was held again for all maintained schools.

Vote – to de-delegate funds to provide education services for maintained schools:

Yes: 3

No: 1

Abstain: 0

Officers apologised for the confusion.

12. Items for next meeting

- Election of Chair
- Financial Report
- High Cost Pupils Report (Dorothy Hadleigh)
- Early Years Funding
- Permanent Exclusion Data
- Report on Higher Needs Recovery
- Report on IOSS funding

13. Future meeting dates

- Thursday 7th March, 09:00, Mezzanine Room 4, Tor Hill House
- Thursday 27th June, 09:00, Venue TBC
- Thursday 10th October, 09:00, Venue TBC
- Thursday 28th November, 09:00, Venue TBC
- Thursday 23rd January 2020, 09:00, Venue TBC
- Thursday 12th March 2020, 09:00, Venue TBC