

Minutes of the Suffolk Schools' Forum held at Endeavour House, Ipswich at 9:30 am on Friday 17 January 2014

Present

1. Members with voting rights

Governors and PRU Managers	Alison Bowman, Earl Soham Primary School (Chair) Allison Coleman, Fairfield Infants School Pat Wilkinson, The Willows School Steve Lovett, Thomas Mills High School Denise Morcom, 1 st Base, Ipswich
Head teachers	James Leese, St Mary's, Woodbridge Sarah Rees, Gt Barton Primary School Paul Elstone, St James CEVA Middle School David Hutton, Northgate High School Odran Doran, The Bridge School Dave Siddall, Westbridge PRU
Diocesan Representatives	Anna Richards, Ixworth CEVCP Hugh O'Neil, St Benedicts Catholic High School
Early Years Providers	Pat Chapman, Bacton Under 5s
14-19 Providers	Helen Wilson, Thurston Community College
Academies	Steve Lovett, Thomas Mills High School Lynn Eldrett, Bungay High School Sue Hargadon, Farlingaye High School

2. Observers and Local Authority (without voting rights)

Observers	
Local Authority	Sue Cook, Director for Children and Young People Phil Whiffing, Assistant Director, Schools Organisation and Infrastructure Leanne Minnican, Schools Business Partner (CSD) Katherine Bailey, Democratic Services Officer (Clerk)

1. Welcome and Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Gordon Jones, Pauline Lucas, Amanda Havers, Andrew Fell, Councillor Lisa Chambers, Gavin Bultitude and Geoff Dobson

2. **Minutes of the meeting held on 13 December 2013 and matters arising**

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 December 2013 were approved and signed by the Chair.

3. **Reporting back from working groups and partner organisations**

The Forum heard that the Resource Allocation Group, Value For Money Group and Children's Trust had not met since the last meeting. There was no representative of the Safeguarding Board present, but the Forum heard from a Member who had been at the meeting. He said that the Board had discussed changes to the assessment framework. It was also raising awareness about education guardianship companies who were bringing asylum children into the country, and schools should note that although the parents of these children were abroad, parental responsibility still resided with them (there were 44 cases at present in Suffolk). Schools had reported problems contacting SCC staff after the move to Landmark House, and also the Ipswich Sexual Health Clinic had moved to a temporary new location on the old Holywells site.

4. **EATS Catering Contract**

The Forum was introduced to Paper B, which had been provided by Eastern Facilities Management Solutions Ltd and provided information on the contract between EFMS and schools for the provision of Free School Meals.

Members were aware that the Service Level Agreement between EATs and schools was not a Forum decision and it was up to each individual school to decide whether to sign it.

Decision: The Forum noted the information provided and agreed to receive a further information paper at a future meeting.

5. **Growth Policy**

The Forum considered Paper C, which provided Members with proposed amendments to the growth policy, specifically related to funding for new schools and funding for schools expanding to receive a significant number of new pupils (generally in SOR areas).

Decision: The Forum agreed:

1. To approve the Growth Policy as set out in Annex A.1 of the agenda documents;
2. That the "significant growth" criteria should apply to schools gaining 10 or more classrooms;
3. That the new policy should be effective from 1 April 2014.

6. High Needs Block Review

At agenda item 6, the Forum considered Paper D, which set out the pressures on the High Needs Block and considered potential strategies to address increased demand on this area of the budget. Members noted that two Task and Finish Groups had been set up to determine short and long term strategies, and the Forum was asked to consider whether it approved the proposed short term strategies and to provide comments to inform a decision making paper on long term strategies, which would be brought to the next meeting.

Members commented that schools were finding it difficult to find funding to bridge the gap between the £4.5k basic allocation per pupil and the £10k funding for high needs pupils. It was agreed that generally there was a long term issue with the current top-up funding mechanism, and also that too much money was spent out of county and there should be more investment in Suffolk-based provision. There was a need to consider why some children could not stay in mainstream school and if out of school provision was provided, it had to be of high quality.

Members questioned where the extra children that had been provided with places in EOTAS settings had come from (mainstream or special schools). They also asked whether the main increase in provision had been in medical or behavioural EOTAS, and requested a breakdown of costs for EOTAS provision.

Members heard that most children with severe emotional and behavioural difficulties and autism were placed out of county. However, the National Autistic Society had selected Suffolk to bid for a Free School which would provide a holistic service (education, health and social care) on one site. If this bid was successful, the Local Authority would commission places and fund top-ups at this school on the same basis as for existing schools. There was also a possibility of expanding place provision at special schools. It was generally recognised that it should be an ambition to make suitable provision for these children available in county, although this would mean developing the county's CAMHs, health and residential offer.

It was recognised that there was currently no local offer for children with mental health needs, although there had been in the past, and there was a need to reintroduce this provision, especially for primary schools, as early intervention reduced the costs of later therapy.

The Forum noted that there were also significant pressures at post-16. SCC had recently taken on responsibility for commissioning post-16 SEN provision, but was finding that the available places were not what young people wanted. Other counties were also having this problem and there was considerable opportunity for cross-border co-operation.

Decision: The Forum decided to agree to the short term strategies as set out in paragraph 19 of Paper D, and to consider a decision-making paper on longer term strategies at the next meeting.

Sue Hargadon left the meeting at 10:45 am

7. **Budgets for 2014/15**

The Forum considered Paper E, the revised school block funding Pro-forma for 2014-15.

Decision: The Forum agreed to approve the pro-forma and to give delegated authority to the Chair and Vice-Chair for any necessary minor adjustments.

8. **Forward Agenda**

The Forum noted the Forward Agenda and was reminded that the next meeting would take place on 25 April 2014.

The meeting closed at 10:52 am