

Minutes of the Suffolk Schools' Forum held at Endeavour House, Ipswich at 9:30 am on Friday 25 April 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 Wendy Donoghue, Bacton Middle School Gordon Jones, Thomas Gainsborough School Pauline Lucas, Hillside School, Sudbury
Head teachers	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	Amanda Havers, Tiddlywinks Nursery
14-19 Providers	
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	Andrew Fell, Suffolk New Academy (Safeguarding Board)
Local Authority	Councillor Lisa Chambers, Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Young People Gavin Bultitude, Assistant Director, Strategic Finance Leanne Minnican, Schools Business Partner Katherine Bailey, Democratic Services Officer (Clerk)

1. Welcome and Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Denise Morcom, James Leese, Pat Chapman, Lynsey Holzer, Helen Wilson, Sue Cook and Geoff Dobson.

2. **Minutes of the meeting held on 17 January 2014 and matters arising**

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 January 2014 were approved and signed by the Chair.

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

The Forum heard that the Value for Money Group had originally been convened to ensure that centrally retained DSG was being spent effectively, to monitor CSD's customer service provision and to support schools in getting value for money from their own budgets. As the CSD contract had come to an end and DSG was delegated to schools (de-delegation now being voted on by phase), Members agreed that the terms of reference of the Value for Money Group should be reconsidered at the next Forum meeting.

The work of the Resource Allocation Group was discussed under agenda item 4, when the Forum considered Paper B.

The Forum received an update on the recent work of the Safeguarding Board. Further information can be obtained by following this link:

<http://suffolksafeguardingchildrenboard.onesuffolk.net/news/november-bulletin-available/>

Members considered the mechanisms in place for the dissemination of information to schools from the Safeguarding Board, and agreed that this issue would be considered outside the meeting and the outcome reported back to the Forum.

There being no representative of the Children's Trust present, it was agreed that Forum Members would receive an update by email.

Members were asked to send nominations by email for primary and secondary representatives on the Children's Emotional Wellbeing Group.

4. **Funding Consultation**

The Forum considered Paper B. Members were reminded that the Government had announced that more money would be available to lower funded authorities, and the indications were that Suffolk would be in receipt of approximately £9m additional funding for 2015-16. The matter had been considered by the Resource Allocation Group, which had suggested that £7m should be allocated to schools, allocated via AWPU (approximately £80 per pupil), and the remaining £2m to the high needs block.

The Forum was reminded that the High Needs Block had a current spend of approximately £9m per annum against a budget of £7m. It was proposed that of the extra £2m, £1m should be put aside as a contingency and the other £1m be used to fund structural changes to high needs provision, as identified by the ongoing review into the high

needs block (not to fund the review itself, as implied in point 16(iii) of Paper B). It was hoped that a structural change would reduce future pressures on the High Needs Block, and develop more suitable provision.

The Forum discussed issues associated with the High Needs Block and the cost of out of county placements. There was a comment that some schools were organising their own EOTAS provision, and were therefore reluctant to commit to additional EOTAS funding through the high needs block. Members were also concerned that there was no proposal to provide extra funding for Early Years, as it was considered that early intervention could considerably reduce the support vulnerable children needed when they were older.

Decision: It was resolved that the Resource Allocation Group would continue to consider the demands and pressures on the system and develop some alternative models, to include the provision of additional funding for early years settings.

Members were asked to consider the proposals in Paper B and provide officers or the Chairman with any comments which could be used to inform the development of alternative models.

The Forum agreed that the Local Authority should respond to the fairer funding consultation as per the draft response which had been circulated by email, and noted that schools should also be encouraged to respond individually.

5. Schools' Choice

The Forum received an update on Schools' Choice, which had been set up to provide traded services to schools (both in Suffolk and out of county) following the ending of the CSD contract. Members heard that a business model had been developed and any profits would be reinvested or directed to the councils' Children and Young Peoples Service. Account managers had been appointed to work directly with schools, a customer board was being formed, which would include representatives from schools and academies, and a number of discussion events had been held with schools to consider what they wanted the service to provide. As a result of customer feedback, more educational psychologists were being recruited, the service's capacity to provide training was being increased (including provision of training to in-school trainers), the banking offer was being improved and ICT charging mechanisms had changed. The aim of the service was to provide a high quality service that was needed and wanted by schools.

Decision: The Forum noted the information provided and commented that Schools Choice had made an excellent start in providing customer focussed support to schools.

6. High Needs – SEN Policy for targeting additional support

The Forum considered Paper D, a local Special Educational Needs Policy for funding additional targeted support to schools in situations where it would be unreasonable, due to the number of high needs pupils on role, to expect a school to fund the first £6000 of additional support for all its high needs pupils. Members were informed that the policy had been set to ensure compliance with DFE guidelines for 2014-15, and that it would apply to all maintained schools and academies receiving appropriate funding for pupils with SEN and/or complex needs (not just to maintained schools as indicated in paragraph 4 of Paper D).

Members heard that in Suffolk, the threshold value for extra funding had been set at 15% of the whole school pupil count being pupils with high level SEN. Schools which had more than the threshold number of pupils with high level SEN on role would receive an extra £6000 per year (pro rata) for each pupil by which the threshold was exceeded. Paper D provided examples of how this would be calculated.

Decision: The Forum noted the information provided.

The Forum adjourned from 11:05 - 11:10 am

7. Financial Management Options for Federations

The Forum was introduced to Paper E, which provided information on the financial management options available to schools federating, and the support available to them from the schools accountancy team. Members heard that accountancy arrangements for federations varied considerably, ranging from some federations with separate budgets, to others with a combined bank account and budget.

Decision: The Forum noted Paper E, which was for information only.

8. CYP Capital

Members were introduced to Paper F, which provided the Forum with information on likely reductions in the SCC capital programme for schools, as a result of a significantly reduced capital funding allocation from DfE for “basic need”. Members heard that a cut of £10m (from £11m in 2013/14 to £1m in 2014/15 and 2015/16) would affect all schools and pupils in Suffolk, but particularly those in areas of demographic growth.

Decision: The Forum noted Paper F, which was for information only.

9. Growth Policy

The Forum was provided with Paper G, which contained information on the Growth policy, which had been updated to take into account the amendments agreed at the Forum meeting on 17 January 2014. It had been agreed by the EfA, and implemented on 1 April 2014.

Decision: The Forum noted Paper G, which was for information only.

Members heard that this policy was for mainstream schools only and not for schools with commissioned places, and agreed that this information should be included in the introduction to the policy.

10. Forward Agenda

The Forum discussed its Forward Agenda.

Decision: The Forum resolved that the date of the July meeting should be changed, and that the meeting should include an agenda item on the terms of reference and remit of the Value for Money Group.

The meeting closed at 11:35 am