

Minutes of the Suffolk Schools' Forum held at Ropes Hall, Kesgrave Community Centre at 9:30 am on Tuesday 15 July 2014

Present:

1. Members with voting rights

Governors and PRU Managers	Alison Bowman, Earl Soham Primary School (Chair)- Stepped down Pat Wilkinson, The Willows School (Chair) Wendy Donoghue, Bacton Middle School Pauline Lucas, Hillside School, Sudbury
Head teachers	James Leese, St Mary's Woodbridge Paul Elstone, St James CEVA Middle School David Hutton, Northgate High School Odran Doran, The Bridge School Dave Siddall, Westbridge PRU
Diocesan Representatives	
Early Years Providers	Amanda Havers, Tiddlywinks Nursery Pat Chapman, Bacton Under 5s
14-19 Providers	
Academies	Steve Lovett, Thomas Mills High School Lynn Eldrett, Bungay High School Julia Upton, Debenham High School

2. Observers and Local Authority (without voting rights)

Observers	Alan Whittaker, Suffolk One (Children's Trust) Andrew Fell, Suffolk New Academy (Safeguarding Board)
Local Authority	Adrian Orr, Assistant Director, Learning and Improvement Gavin Bultitude, Assistant Director, Resources and Support Leanne Minnican, Schools Business Partner Cheryl Sharland, Head of Inclusive Services Paul Senior, Consultant Katherine Bailey, Democratic Services Officer (Clerk)

1. Welcome and Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Lisa Chambers, Allison Coleman, Sue Cook, Geoff Dobson, Sue Hargadon, who was substituted by Julia Upton, Gordon Jones, Denise Morcom, Hugh O'Neil, Sarah Rees and Anna Richards.

2. Minutes of the meeting held on 25 April 2014 and matters arising

The minutes of the meeting held on 25 April 2014 were approved and signed by the Chair.

3. Reporting back from working groups and partner organisations

Members were informed that the work of the Resource Allocation Working Group and the Value For Money Group were the subjects of later agenda items, and so feedback from these groups was not received under this agenda item.

The Forum heard that the Safeguarding Board was considering the best way to reach independent schools and some academies which did not buy into Governor Services. It had published its annual report, and copies could be obtained from its website at:

<http://suffolksafeguardingchildrenboard.onesuffolk.net/information-and-links/lscb-business-publications/>

Members also received, from the representative of the Children's Trust, an update on the Health and Wellbeing Board discussions.

4. Election of Chair and Vice Chair of the Forum

Decision: On the nomination of Alison Bowman, seconded by David Hutton, Pat Wilkinson was elected as Chair of the Forum for the period to July 2015.

The election of a Vice Chair was deferred until the next meeting.

5. DSG Outturn and School Balances

The Forum was introduced to Paper B, which provided information on the position with regard to DSG spend and reserves as at 31 March 2014, and also information on school balances.

Members heard that the DSG centrally held budgets had been underspent by £1.183m for a variety of reasons, which were detailed in Paper B.

The Forum considered maintained school balances, which it heard had increased by more than £2m during the financial year to 31 March 2014. Members heard that the Local Authority had a small team that worked with schools in deficit, but did not have the capacity to work with other schools. However, it was concerned about the surplus balances which some schools had been accumulating since the Forum decided to end balance control mechanisms.

Decision: The Forum:

1. noted the underspend on DSG and the amount held in reserves as at 31 March 2014; and
2. agreed that the Local Authority would analyse the relationship between school balance data and schools' three year financial plans, and identify any schools that were predicted to accumulate large surplus balances. The findings would be

reported back to the next Forum meeting, expressed as pro rata of the number of pupils on roll.

6. **High Needs Block**

The Forum was introduced to Paper C, and received a presentation on the preliminary findings of a strategic review of alternative provision in Suffolk. The review had been commissioned by the Local Authority, the objective being to consider how existing systems and policies could be reconfigured to build on good practice, respond to local need and meet the requirement to make full time educational provision available to pupils needing to be educated outside of the mainstream school setting.

The Forum was concerned about the information the paper contained about PRUs, as the data was not representative of PRUs in Suffolk. Members commented that most Suffolk PRUs were good or outstanding, and they had all been working with schools to address the issues posed by the rising number of exclusions from Suffolk schools, sometimes to the detriment of their own provision. The Forum agreed that it was necessary for PRUs and schools to continue to work together to promote good practice and reduce the number of permanent exclusions from mainstream provision.

Decision: The Forum agreed that an action plan should be developed, but requested that an effective debate be informed by a paper providing a range of appropriately detailed proposals. It was agreed that a working group would be set up to consider the options and produce a suitable discussion paper for the Forum's consideration.

7. **Funding Consultation**

The Forum considered Paper D, in which it was asked to endorse a recommendation made by the Resource Allocation Working Group (RAWG) to allocate the additional £9.2m of funding available to Suffolk in 2015-16 based on option 6.

The Forum had previously considered the matter on 25 April 2014 and, having rejected the proposal it received at that meeting, had asked RAWG to consider the matter further. RAWG had then proposed option 6, which it considered best satisfied the issues put forward by the Forum.

Members noted that Option 5, discussed in paragraph 22 of Paper D, had not been put forward by the Suffolk Primary Headteachers' Association, although the body did provide a response to this proposal.

Decision: The Forum agreed, on a vote of 2 against and 9 in favour:

1. that the £9.2m increase in funding would be distributed in accordance with Option 6 for the financial years 2015-16, 2016-17 and 2017-18; and
2. that the £1.182m non-recurrent funding available in 2015-16 (DSG underspend from 2014-15) should be allocated as approximately £880k to the schools block (increasing AWPU by

approximately £10 per pupil), £120k to high need block (split to be agreed) and £182k to early years (equating to approximately 3p per hour on the base rate).

8. Terms of reference – VFM Group

The Forum was presented with the proposed amended Terms of Reference for the Value for Money Group.

Decision: The Forum agreed that this group should continue in accordance with the proposed terms of reference as detailed in Annex A, and was asked to propose potential members by email. It was agreed that the group would not necessarily need to be comprised of Forum members, and should include a representative of the early years providers.

9. Learning Partnership

The Forum noted progress with the development of the Learning Partnership, which was detailed in Paper F. Members heard that the Partnership would exist in shadow form from September 2014 and would formally separate from the Local Authority in September 2015. Three primary headteachers had been appointed to assist with stakeholder engagement and arrangements were being made to appoint an Executive Director.

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

10. Forward Agenda

The Forum considered its Forward Agenda and noted that the next meeting, which would take place on Monday 13 October 2014, would include the election of Vice Chair and review of school balances compared with three year budget plans and pupil numbers.

The meeting closed at 12:20 pm