

DRAFT minutes of the Suffolk Schools' Forum held at Ipswich in the Pioneer Hall, Co-op Education Centre, Fore Street at 2:00 pm on Thursday, 24 November 2016

Present:

Non Schools Members	James Leese, Anglican Moira Kemble, Catholic Pat Chapman PVI Helen Wilson, Post 16
Academy Members	Nigel Burgoyne, Mainstream Julia Upton, Mainstream Jo Stanley-Bell, Mainstream Richard Thomas, Mainstream Mark Kemp, Special Dave Siddall, PRU
Maintained School Members	Odran Doran, Special Graham Alcock, PRU Gill Mitchell, Primary Head Allison Coleman, Primary Governor Dave Hutton, Secondary Head Andrew Blit, Others Alison Bowman, Others (Chair)

Observers and Local Authority

Observers	There were observers present
Local Authority	Gavin Bultitude, Assistant Director, Resources and Support Sue Cook, Corporate Director for Children and Adults Cheryl Sharland, Strategic Lead Inclusion Georgina Green, Head of Service Development SEN/AP Fiona Heath, Schools Funding Policy Manager Councillor Gordon Jones, Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Skills Sonya Harban, Finance Business Partner Adrian Orr, Deputy Assistant Director, Education and Learning Linda Pattle, Democratic Services Officer (Clerk)

1. Welcome and Apologies for Absence

The Chair welcomed the Forum and observers to the meeting. The Forum was advised that apologies for absence had been received

from: Stephen Carr, Secondary Governor; and Caroline Gibson, Mainstream (substituted by Richard Thomas).

2. Confirmation of membership

The Forum noted its current membership as set out in Paper A.

3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 October 2016 (Paper B) were approved and signed by the Chair.

4. De-delegation and centrally retained DSG

Maintained school representatives considered Paper C, which requested the Forum to agree: the de-delegation of funding back to the Local Authority for the continuation of services as outlined in the paper; and the continuation of Centrally Retained DSG funding as set out in Annex A to Paper C.

In response to a question, Gavin Bultitude stated that he was unaware of any charges for admissions other than those relating to admissions appeals. However, it was agreed that the position would be checked and the outcome reported back to the Forum.

The Forum also requested a detailed breakdown of Early Help spend for the next meeting.

Decision: Primary and Secondary Maintained School representatives, having voted by phase, agreed:

1. To de-delegate to the LA funding for the following services:
 - a. Contingencies;
 - b. Behaviour Support Services;
 - c. Support to under-performing ethnic groups and bilingual learners; and
 - d. Trade Unions
2. That Centrally Retained DSG in 2017-2018 should be continued as set out in Annex A to Paper C.
3. On the continuation of the funding of the growth fund to support schools that are required to provide extra places to meet basic need within the authority, including pre-opening and re-organisation costs.
4. That the ESG retained rate funding is centrally held to continue to fund the costs of the local authority's role in supporting the provision of excellent education for all children of compulsory school age.

5. Proposal to fund Suffolk Association of Secondary Heads (SASH) and Suffolk Primary Headteachers Association (SPHA) from Retained LA Funding

Madeleine Vigar, Chair of SASH, presented Paper D, which proposed that the Forum should agree to the funding of SASH and SPHA from the DSG by the re-allocation of existing funding streams from the retained budgets.

Decision: The Forum agreed:

That a sum of £50,000 per annum each be reallocated from centrally retained LA Funding to the Suffolk Association of Secondary Heads and the Suffolk Primary Headteachers Association.

6. Funding the Apprenticeship Levy

Maintained school representatives considered Paper E, setting out proposals as to how the LA would collect funds from maintained schools (excluding voluntary aided and foundation schools) to meet the costs of the new Apprenticeship Levy.

The Forum heard that since Paper E had been published the County Council had received draft guidance from the Local Government Association, based on their discussions with the DfE. The draft guidance indicated that, contrary to the proposals in Paper E, the LA should not top-slice budgets to create a central pool to meet the cost of the Levy. Instead, the draft guidance was that budgets should remain unchanged, and the actual costs relating to each school's staff should be charged to the school's budget. Further details about this draft guidance had been circulated to all Forum members prior to the meeting.

Forum members expressed concern about the impact the Levy would have on school budgets, especially small primaries which would be disproportionately disadvantaged. However, they also recognised that there would be opportunities to rethink some of their training arrangements to take advantage of the new funding for apprenticeships. The Forum requested that advice about how to maximise these opportunities (set out in an easily understandable format) be circulated to all schools and chairs of governors.

Decision: Maintained school representatives agreed:

1. That the cost of the Apprenticeship Levy should be charged to each maintained school's budget if national guidance (when confirmed) continued to be against top-slicing. However, if the national guidance changed to permit top-slicing, then that should be the method used to cover the cost of the Levy.
2. To note that it was estimated that the full year cost of the Apprenticeship Levy would be £1.14 million, equating to approximately £23 per pupil for each maintained school. Further to note that, in recognition of the level of pressures schools would face in 2017/18, Suffolk County Council would make 50% of the cost of the levy available non-recurrently from corporate reserves, reducing the impact to around £12 per head in 2017/18, and rising to the full £23 per head in 2018/19.

3. To note the opportunities available to all schools, including academies, to benefit from the funding pot created by the Levy to meet the costs of training apprenticeships of different types.

7. High Needs Update

The Forum considered Paper F, setting out the approach to making efficiencies on the High Needs Block expenditure and proposed arrangements for a working group, as agreed at the Forum's meeting on 13 October 2016.

The Forum heard that the working group would be able to take some decisions itself but on certain matters it would need to make recommendations to different bodies as appropriate, including the SCC Cabinet and the Forum itself.

Decision: The Forum agreed:

1. To note the contents of the report at Paper F, and in particular the approach to making the £1.7 million efficiencies on the High Needs Block expenditure, which had been agreed at the previous meeting, and which would be reinvested alongside the £3 million funding transfer from the Schools Block.
2. The membership of the working group as set out in sections 10 to 12 of Paper F, including seven schools members as follows:
 - One post 16 provider nominated by the SEND Further Education & Learning Committee
 - One special schools head
 - One PRU Head
 - Two maintained representatives, one academy and one maintained
 - One governor representative
 - One early years representative
3. That Forum members would put forward nominations to fill places on the group by 1 December, with a view to holding the first meeting from 12.00 to 2.00 pm on 8 December 2016. (It was suggested that Alison Bowman and Allison Coleman might share a place on the group.)
4. The draft terms of reference of the working group as set out in section 13 of Paper F, subject to:
 - a. the addition of "the cohort of young people aged 16 + for whom there is currently no provision";
 - b. the addition of a requirement for the group to liaise with the Engagement Hub to engage with the end users; and
 - c. any further comments received from Forum members by 1 December 2016.

8. Schools Financial Risk Analysis

Michael Quinton, Senior Service Accountant, presented Paper G which was for information only. The Forum noted the contents of the report.

9. Suffolk's Scheme for the Financing of Schools

Michael Quinton, Senior Service Accountant, presented Paper H which was for information only. The Forum noted the contents of the report.

10. Forward Agenda

The Forum noted the updated Forward Agenda (Paper I). Members noted that the meeting scheduled for 17 January 2017 was provisional and would be cancelled if possible.

Decision: The Forum agreed to meet on 15 December 2016 from 9.00 am to 1.00 pm in Ropes Hall, Kesgrave Conference Centre.

The meeting closed at 3.26 pm