

**Unconfirmed minutes of the Suffolk Schools' Forum held at 1.30 pm on 3 October 2017 in the Britten Room, Endeavour House, Ipswich**

**Present:**

<b>Non-School Members</b>	Pat Chapman, PVI Amanda Havers, PV Maria Kemble, Catholic Helen Wilson, Post 16
<b>Academy Members</b>	Debbie Ebbage, Mainstream Phil Hurst, Mainstream Lisa Jones, Mainstream Mark Kemp, Special Steve Lovett, Mainstream Dave Siddall, PRU
<b>Maintained School Members</b>	Graham Alcock, PRU Andrew Blit, Others Alison Bowman, Others Allison Coleman, Primary School Governor (Chair) Odran Doran, Special Dave Hutton, Secondary Head (Vice Chair) Gill Mitchell, Primary Head

**Observers and Local Authority**

<b>Observers</b>	There were observers present
<b>Local Authority</b>	Allan Cadzow, Director for Children and Young People (Interim) Fiona Heath, Schools Funding Policy Manager Adrian Orr, Assistant Director, Education and Learning Gordon Jones, Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Skills Judith Mobbs, Assistant Director, Inclusion and Skills Susan Cassedy, Democratic Services Officer

**1. Welcome and Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Lil Newton, Lynne Eldrett (substituted by Debbie Ebbage), Julia Upton (substituted by Phil Hurst) and Dawn Carmen-Jones (substituted by Lisa Jones).

**2. Minutes of the previous meeting & issues arising**

The Minutes of the previous meeting held on 18 July 2017 were approved and signed by the Chair.

Issues arising: With regard to Item 7 'Suffolk Safeguarding Children Board' Adrian Orr advised that the Council would continue to provide a model safeguarding policy for schools. The Safeguarding Policy was hoped to be signed off that week and would be shared with all schools via 'Suffolk Headlines'. The policy would be accessible on both the Suffolk County Council and the Suffolk Learning Websites and would be updated annually.

Schools Forum agreed that paper copies of the meeting papers would be provided for governor members only, with immediate effect.

### **3. Preparation for 2018-19 schools' budgets**

The Forum considered Paper B, which requested it to approve the clawback of the 2016-17 overspend of £1.939m as a first call on the 2018-19 Schools Budget and to consider the proposals regarding the funding formula and the minimum funding guarantee and capping/scaling in preparation for the 2018-19 school budgets.

In response to a Member's query regarding the possibility of clawing back from each of the blocks, officers advised that the high needs block and the early years block were both under considerable financial pressure, and the DfE Guidance makes provision for the deficit to be funded from the schools block.

Forum Members raised concern about the size of the clawback pointing out that although 0.5% (of the schools block) did not sound like a large amount, it did actually equate to half of the salary/pay award increase. A Forum member suggested that the Forum would be more able to support the possibility of an alternative partial clawback of half of the deficit (approximately 0.25%). Officers confirmed that this was possible and stressed the importance of having reserves and that it could not be less than a 0.25% contingency.

A Member noted that in 2019/20 schools may be in a better position to provide more contingency or pay back an overspent contingency.

The Forum in noting the significant changes to the funding system for 2018-19 and that its approval was required for the carry forward deficit on central expenditure to be funded from the schools budget:

- i) Agreed by majority (15 in favour and 1 abstention) to claw back half of the overspend of £1.939m (approximately 0.25% of schools block) from the schools block allocation for 2018-19;
- ii) Agreed to receive a first draft on the proposals regarding the funding formula (based on the national funding formula) and the minimum funding guarantee (at -1.5%) and capping/scaling in preparation for the 2018-19 school budgets at its meeting in November 2017; and
- iii) Agreed that the decision on the proposals regarding the funding formula and the minimum funding guarantee and capping/scaling in preparation for the 2018-19 school budgets may be deferred until January 2018.

#### 4. **Central school services block funding and de-delegation for 2018-19**

The Forum considered Paper C on central school services block funding and de-delegation. Allan Cadzow, Director for Children and Young People (Interim) was in attendance for the meeting and presented the report.

**Central Schools Services Block** (All Forum Members able to vote):

Regulatory and other statutory services – Annex A:

After voting unanimously in favour the Forum **agreed** to an annual budget of £1,569,227.

General landlord duties (all building owned by the LA) – Annex B:

After voting unanimously in favour the Forum **agreed** to an annual budget of £646,240.

Admissions – Annex C:

After voting unanimously in favour the Forum **agreed** to an annual budget of £137,560.

Servicing of Schools Forum – Annex D

After voting unanimously in favour the Forum **agreed** to an annual budget of £2,550.

Termination of employment costs – Annex E

In noting that the budget was slightly overspent in the previous year, after voting unanimously in favour the Forum **agreed** to an annual budget of £250,000.

CAMHS – Annex F

After voting unanimously in favour the Forum **agreed** to an annual budget of £170,100.

Education & Learning – Annex G

In response to a Forum Member's concern about quality assurance, officers advised that they were continually reviewing processes and were always looking for ways to work more cost effectively.

A Forum Member in recognising the importance of 'good' schools paying towards 'the greater good' questioned whether 'good' schools were receiving good value for money. Officers advised that the investment was about the whole system. Officers also confirmed that it was possible to transfer an element of the money.

Following a vote of 11 in favour, 5 against and 1 abstention the Forum **agreed** by majority to an annual budget of £1,799,846.

Headteacher association support – Annex H

After voting unanimously in favour the Forum **agreed** to an annual budget of £103,100.

Early Help – Annex I

After voting unanimously in favour the Forum **agreed** to an annual budget of £2,452,678.

#### Looked After Children education – Annex J

After voting unanimously in favour the Forum **agreed** to an annual budget of £373,779.

#### Schools Support – Annex K

After voting unanimously in favour the Forum **agreed** to an annual budget of £706,389.

**De-delegated Services** (f primary and secondary maintained schools members only able to vote by phase)

#### Contingency (schools in financial difficulties) – Annex L

It was noted that maintained secondary schools considered that the contingency was too high and was not necessarily justified by the risk in the following year as the risk going forward should be lower.

It was **agreed** to bring Annex L back to the November meeting for further consideration:

- a) Annex L to be remodelled for secondary and primary schools looking at options to reduce contributions or if not possible to demonstrate why; and
- b) to look at contributions for both phases and look at potential need to demonstrate proportionality to what the need would be.

#### Behaviour support services – Annex M

After voting unanimously in favour the two secondary maintained schools members **agreed** to a per pupil amount of £12.18.

After voting unanimously in favour the three primary maintained schools members **agreed** to a per pupil amount of £12.18

#### Support to underperforming ethnic groups and bilingual learners – Annex N

After voting unanimously in favour the two secondary maintained schools members **agreed** to a per pupil amount of £1.91.

After voting unanimously in favour the three primary maintained schools members **agreed** to a per pupil budget of £1.91.

#### Trade Unions – Annex O

After voting unanimously in favour the two secondary maintained schools members **agreed** to a per pupil amount of £1.50.

After voting unanimously in favour the three primary maintained schools members **agreed** to a per pupil amount of £1.50.

*The Forum adjourned at 2.42 pm*

**5. Split site funding 2018-19**

The Forum considered Paper D, which asked it to agree an increase to the local funding formula lump sum allocations for schools where the main teaching base operates on split sites and to retain the split site funding factor within the local funding where there was a need to transport children to other physical education facilities.

Officers advised that the proposals addressed the additional costs associated with schools running two separate teaching sites. Officers confirmed that the six schools which are understood to meet the criteria to qualify for the split site factor were all secondary schools. A Forum member who was a headteacher of a split site secondary school advised that in their particular school, the additional costs for reception staff, site managers, ground services, IT links/mini buses and technicians was £144,000.

In response to Forum Member's query on whether working towards the National Funding Formula (NFF) would negate this issue, officers advised that the NFF for 2018/19 includes split site funding based on historical cost and is not yet formula based. In response to a question regarding whether special schools should be entitled to split site funding, officers confirmed that high needs guidance for 2018/19 had not yet been published but the current funding policy does not provide split site funding for special schools.

The Forum was advised that some local authorities were funding at a lower level but the full amount of £50,000 was most commonly applied and officers confirmed that this was the most realistic contribution.

The Forum agreed to support option 3 in principal.

*Andrew Blit left the meeting at this point. The Forum noted that it was his last meeting and thanked him for his contribution.*

**6. Funding for permanent exclusions**

The Forum considered Paper E, which asked the Forum to agree a new local policy for funding recoupment for permanent exclusions. Judith Mobbs, Assistant Director, Inclusion and Skills was in attendance for this item and presented the report.

In response to Forum Members' queries officers advised that if the Forum agreed to a local agreement the local authority would write to academies informing them that there was a local agreement in place and request that they commit to it.

The Forum was also advised of the need to make clear provision around special schools and PRUs and noted that exclusion guidance had now changed.

A Forum Member suggested a table to show potential solutions to the problem of funding across financial years as this would be better than two schools trying to come to an arrangement. Officers agreed to build this in and to use the Forum as a test bed in order to get feedback before writing to all schools.

After voting unanimously in favour the Forum **agreed:**

- i) a revised policy that aligned to the School and Early Years Finance (England) Regulations 2017 which could be universally applied across all settings in Suffolk;
- ii) that the policy would set out the arrangements for the transfer of funding between a school and the Local Authority, or receiving school, when a school permanently excludes a pupil;
- iii) to a local agreement to establish a policy that applied to all settings and that the policy put in place would apply to all schools regardless of their status, therefore ensuring that the arrangements for funding excluded pupils were consistent, equitable and fair to all settings.
- iv) the levels of funding to be transferred from school budgets to the receiving school or Local Authority to support permanently excluded pupils was greater of the 'funding attributable to a pupil of the same age and personal circumstances' as per the 2017 regulations or the sum of £2,000 + AWPU (pro-rata) – the current level of funding agreed under the existing exclusion policy.

## **7. High needs budget update**

The Forum received a verbal update from Judith Mobbs, Assistant Director, Inclusion and Skills on the high needs budget.

The Forum was advised that it would be presented with a substantive paper at its next meeting.

Judith Mobbs advised that a great deal of work had been carried out over the summer and that the action plan was proceeding as set out in the previous paper which came to the Forum in July 2017. This work had included trying to get on top of a range of information to understand the scale of the problem. There had been a significant increase in demand with an increase from 10,000 to 12,000 children in the SEND block between 2012 and 2017 with a projection of a further increase of 46% by 2020.

Over the last 3 to 4 years there were 114 more children in special school places with 300 more children with high needs in mainstream schools and 40 more children in independent settings outside of Suffolk. There had also been an increase in placement costs which were now around £140,00 per year depending on complexity of needs. Officers were looking to identify the reasons for this increase and how to manage the escalating cost and also how to increase efficiency.

Judith Mobbs advised that the current forecast position showed a £1.5m overspend but there would be a clearer picture at the time of the next meeting in November. She added that £2m had been saved due to keeping children in Suffolk so the current position was much better than it could have been. A further £156,000 had been saved by introducing contract rigour.

The Forum noted that it was not just Suffolk experiencing a constant increase in demand but that this was a regional and national problem.

The Forum noted the verbal update.

## **8. Forward Agenda**

The Forum considered the Forward Agenda (Paper F). With regard to items for the Schools Forum meeting on 27 November 2017 the Forum noted that:

- i) there would be two reports on High Needs; one on the High Needs block position and a consultation paper for the High Needs funding system reform.
- ii) that as the schools monitoring and financial risk item was no longer appropriate as it was only for maintained schools, it would only be brought back to the Forum one more time, incorporated with the de-delegation of contingency (schools in financial difficulty) paper. In future, schools monitoring and financial risk would be dealt with internally by the local authority.
- iii) as there is no change to The Scheme of Financial Management, it would not be necessary to present the scheme to the Forum.

The meeting closed at 3.50 pm