

Minutes of the Suffolk Schools' Forum held at 9.30 am on Tuesday 9 July 2019 in the Conference Room, Landmark House, Ipswich

Present:

Non-School Members	Amanda Havers, Early Years
Academy Members	Dawn Carman-Jones, Mainstream Mark Kemp, Special Steve Lovett, Mainstream Colin Turner, Mainstream Angela Ransby, AP Provision Darren Woodward, Mainstream Michelle Hughes, Mainstream (sub for Jenny Milsom)
Maintained School Members	Allison Coleman, Primary (Chair) Gillian Mitchell, Primary Graham Alcock, PRU Darron Jackson, Primary Karen Mills, Primary

Observers and Local Authority

Observers	There were observers present at the meeting
Local Authority	Allan Cadzow Adrian Orr Gordon Jones Judith Mobbs Michael Quinton Teresa Spilling Joy Stodart (Item 5)

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1.	Welcome and Apologies	<p>The Chair welcomed new members to Schools Forum following the recent election for representatives.</p> <p>The Chair raised the importance of equity of representation on Schools Forum for the range of education settings across the county. However, there is then the expectation that we collectively act as advocates for the needs of all 100,000 pupils in Suffolk schools and do the best for all pupils in coming to our decisions.</p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Helen Wilson, Alison Bowman, Julia Upton, Jenny Milsom (substitute Michelle Hughes), Jo Stanley-Bell, Lynn Eldrett, Maria Kemble, Pat Chapman, Sharon Waldron, Sonya Harban.</p>
2.	Minutes of the previous meeting & issues arising	<p>The minutes of the previous meeting held on 14 January were agreed and signed off by the Chair.</p>
3.	Dedicated Schools Grant Outturn 2018-19 & SFVS Update	<p>Schools Forum is asked to note the overspend on the DSG revenue budget for 2018-19 of £2.702m and the deficit balance of reserves at 31 March 2019 of £2.147m. This is below the 1% of the total DSG budget which the DfE regulations allow the reserve to be in deficit by before a recovery plan, agreed between the Local Authority and Schools Forum, needs to be submitted.</p> <p>The continuing pressures in SEND are likely to mean a further significant overspend in 2019-20, which will push the DSG deficit reserve over the 1% threshold unless significant further funding is agreed by the DfE in year.</p> <p>Schools Forum are asked to agree that the High Needs Working Group work alongside the SEND service to input into a paper to come back to Schools Forum in October which will provide options to try and limit the DSG reserves deficit over the next few years.</p> <p>Schools Forum are also asked to note the information with regards to SFVS (paragraph 35 onwards)</p> <p>Reason for recommendation</p> <p>The recommendation is made to acknowledge the financial pressures facing both individual schools, and in the SEND service. The continuing deficit will only</p>

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		<p>be reduced by a jointly agreed plan in the absence of significant additional funding from the DfE.</p> <p>Alternative options</p> <p>An alternative option would be to leave any decision on the funding of the deficit until the end of this financial year, at which point it will almost certainly be over the 1% threshold, and then agree a recovery plan for the DfE.</p> <p>A further alternative option would be to request the clawback of all or some of the net overspend from the 2020-21 Schools Budget at this point in time. It is felt that this option should be considered by all stakeholders over the summer period alongside other actions that could be taken and discussed in detail in October.</p> <p>Who will be affected by this decision?</p> <p>The availability of reserves affects all schools and provider settings, and the associated activity that can be funded over and above that funded from the revenue budgets.</p> <p>Recovery plan needs to be in place for £5m (1%).</p> <p>The High Needs Working Group needs additional mainstream and post-16 representation. Forum members were asked for additional representation. Nominations to join the group to be sent to Judith Mobbs.</p> <p>DCJ: Is this growing spend attributable to a particular thing?</p> <p><i>JM: There is a drive from families to exercise their right for young people up to age of 25 to continue in supported education. This will create a continued upward pressure on post-16 provision for another few years. Work is being done to bring back young people from out county residential provision to educate them locally where this is appropriate.</i></p> <p><i>There is also an overall growth in demand for places. We are creating additional provision and the first new placements will come online in 2020. The SEND team are working hard with PRUs and special schools around placements and these settings have helped create additional provision, but there is no further</i></p>

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		<p><i>capacity in existing settings. The team are also bearing down on the average costs of independent settings using an evidence-based challenge approach. Parents however will have fought hard to get their child into a setting, and a clear evidence base is needed that needs can be met locally before parents will agree to their child moving again.</i></p> <p>Early Years Block: There is a small overspend for the service, but LA will be in a better position come July/August to understand the level of this. Uptake in 3 and 4 year olds is also increasing.</p> <p>Central School Services Block: Landlord duties to be discussed at October meeting alongside the other services to be reviewed.</p> <p>School balances are decreasing so the downward trend in reserves continues. There are 32 academy conversions, where balances will go to sponsors/MATs.</p> <p>ACTIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High Needs Working Group: Forum members to seek new mainstream representatives. – Expressions of interest to be emailed to Judith Mobbs. • Central School Services Block: AO/MQ to meet before October meeting.
4.	The High Needs Block	<p>To note the continued significant pressures on the DSG High Needs Block due to rising numbers and complexity of children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND); a lack of local specialist education placements and the impact of the fairer funding arrangements for high needs funded pupils in mainstream provision as part of the new high needs funding.</p> <p>Reason for recommendation</p> <p>To provide Schools' Forum members with up to date information on the continuing significant and escalating pressures on the high needs block following the report in January 2019, and the expectation of further overspend in making appropriate provision for the growing number of children with specialist education needs.</p>

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		<p>Who will be affected by this decision?</p> <p>This situation affects all education providers in Suffolk.</p> <p>Judith Mobbs introduced this paper. High Needs Block is a big challenge within the DSG and has been for some time. There are a number of layers of context. In December 2018 the Secretary of State announced a call for evidence on SEND funding. Suffolk is working hard to prepare a submission for this evidence call. The DfE have produced an interesting benchmarking tool which sets out the level of spend around different types of provision. JM to provide link.</p> <p>We remain in a challenging position; Suffolk currently receives £13m less in its HNB compared to the average for LAs. Norfolk CC receive £8.8m more pro-rata.</p> <p>Our challenge is not only the level of funding but also the number of plans and the rate of growth. Following the Scrutiny meeting yesterday we will do some further analysis around the features of Suffolk learners, compared with the number of plans. Maintaining so many plans and the growth rate of need creates a challenging funding position. Table on Page 4 in the paper shows the rise in plans, broadly static until January 2016. January 2019: 4718 and as at May 2019: 4,948 plans.</p> <p>DCJ suggested it would be helpful to have a breakdown in numbers of plans by phase; primary, secondary, post-16.</p> <p>JM agreed to provide and these will be circulated.</p> <p>JM commented on the revised funding systems, this had led to some uncomfortable conversations previously, but this has been turned around. Izzy Connell came in to lead this work. Errors have been rectified and the new approach is much more robust. JM wanted to note thanks to special schools and mainstream colleagues. Every child in special and mainstream school will have comparable bands based upon their needs. Following Izzy's work with the school based colleagues the situation was not as as</p>

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		<p>bad as it appeared from the original sample.</p> <p>Since the January 2019 SEND report, the SCC Policy Development Panel has made its recommendations about additional specialist places. The April Cabinet paper approved the capital funding and first placements are hoped to be available from autumn 2020. This will include 3 further new specialist schools and up to 36 specialist units attached to mainstream schools. A planning workshop is scheduled before the end of term with schools that have expressed interest in a hosting a unit. 50 attendees have signed up so far. Long term this is a more cost effective approach and a better system for children.</p> <p>JM noted that she is working with the newly appointed lead for High Needs Funding, Gemma Morgan, who started with the team on 1 July.</p> <p>JM also wanted to specifically thank members of the High Needs Working Group – thanks to Dawn, Gill and Michelle for supporting Izzy. JM again encouraged more mainstream colleagues to join the High Needs Working Group. A report will come to forum in October with more detail around the high needs overspend.</p> <p><u>Questions from Forum:</u></p> <p>MK raised the issue of the potential £3m or more shortfall and if it would mean a cut in funding for schools? <i>Other options include possibly reduce top-up values. Any changes made will be equitable.</i></p> <p>What is the recovery plan timeline?</p> <p><i>MQ stated this is a 5 year timeline; high needs funding is hard to predict, particularly as we don't know the duration of transitional protection.</i></p> <p>ACTIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Report to come back to October meeting with regards to overspend.</i>
5.	Growth Policy & Funding Update	Schools Forum is asked to note future pressures on pupil growth in Suffolk, new schools in the pipeline and the potential for increased expenditure in this area.

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		<p>MQ explained that a movement of funding from the schools' formula into the growth fund would not be treated as a transfer between blocks. Schools' Forum would still need to agree the total growth fund.</p> <p>Reason for recommendation</p> <p>The recommendation is made to acknowledge the financial pressures facing Suffolk as it supports an increasing school population, the need to expand existing schools as well as establishing new schools in areas where basic need cannot be met by the existing school infrastructure.</p> <p>The LA would not expect to increase the growth fund budget in 2020-21 but will confirm this at the October meeting. Further information and more detailed plans of may be required for 2021-22 will then be available.</p> <p>Alternative options</p> <p>Schools Forum could decide not to revisit the growth fund and risk the budget being overspent in the future which would increase the already growing DSG deficit.</p> <p>Who will be affected by this decision?</p> <p>All mainstream schools and academies will be affected as the growth funding comes from the DSG schools block allocation.</p> <p>Joy Stodart, Schools Commissioning Manager, was in attendance for this item. The current growth fund budget is £1.78m and has been for a number of years. In 2017-18 there was an overspend. The budget for 2018-19 is likely to show a small underspend. The forecast for 2019-20 is for a £250,000m underspend, although there may be some expansions which have not been taken into account at this stage.</p> <p>Looking ahead, between 2020-2023, Suffolk is planning expansions of up to 11 primary schools and the building of up to 6 new primary schools and a new high school. Housing completions are currently running at 50% of what we have forecast however so some schemes may be delayed. Copleston High</p>

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		<p>School is in the process now of expanding by a form of entry. Expansions are planned at Stowupland High, Sybil Andrews Academy, Bramford CEVCP and at Abbots Green Primary Academy. Barrow CEVCP is adding 2year groups to become a two tier primary school. Tollgate primary school will then be the only first school in the county. Thurston CEVCP Academy is expanding and relocating in 2021, Chantry High will be adding another form of entry. Lakenheath new primary is still the subject of judicial review.</p> <p>Looking much further ahead towards 2022-23, new housing is expected to mean that expansions might be needed at Brooklands, Haughley, Bacton, Shotley, Elmswell and Woolpit. A new free school building will be housed in the Co-op building (Ipswich Central Free School).</p> <p><u>Question:</u> DCJ asked about Growth around special schools? <i>MQ commented that this is being separately funded.</i></p>
6.	Forward Agenda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15 October: significant meeting due to voting on CSSB and de-delegation – members asked to ensure they have read papers in readiness to vote. • November meeting: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Items will come out of the October meeting ○ Add SSF
7.	Date of the next meeting	The next meeting is confirmed as Tuesday 15 October, 9.30am in the VMC at Landmark House.
		Meeting closed at 10.25am.