

Minutes of the Suffolk Schools' Forum held at 9.30am on Tuesday 22 June 2021 via Microsoft Teams (and live streamed through YouTube) due to the current COVID pandemic

Present:

Non-School Members	Colin Shaw, 16-19 Provider Maria Kemble, Diocesan Amanda Havers, PVI Sharon Waldron, Diocesan
Academy Members	Julia Upton, Mainstream Steve Lovett, Mainstream Louise Spall, Mainstream Andrew Berry, Mainstream Peter Collins, Special Angela Ransby, AP Provision
Maintained School Members	Allison Coleman, Primary (Chair) Alison Bowman, Primary Darron Jackson, Primary Gill Mitchell, Primary Karen Mills, Primary Ruth Coleman, Nursery

Observers and Local Authority

Observers	There were observers present at the meeting
Local Authority	Rachel Hood Allan Cadzow Adrian Orr Gemma Morgan Sonya Harban Michael Quinton Christina Lewis Teresa Spilling Barbara Barraclough

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1.	Welcome – Virtual Meeting Etiquette	<p>The Chair welcomed members to Schools Forum.</p> <p>This meeting is a public meeting being live streamed via YouTube.</p>
2.	Apologies for absence	<p>Apologies for absence were received from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pat Chapman, Dawn Carman-Jones, Darren Woodward and Daniel Jones <p><u>Substitute:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peter Collins attending on behalf of Sue Prickett <p><u>Resigning:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Louise Spall will be leaving Somerleyton Primary at the end of the summer term and therefore must resign from her position as academy representative on the Forum <p><u>Moved on:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Angela Berry has been attending this meeting during this academic year, however she has now moved on from Suffolk Academies Trust
3.	Minutes of the previous meeting & issues arising	<p>The minutes of the previous meeting held on 21 January 2021 were agreed and signed off by the Chair.</p> <p>Page 10: word change: ‘deal’ rather than ‘detail’: <u>Allan Cadzow</u> Association of directors of Children’s Services (ADCS) is constantly lobbying for a better deal for the Early Year sector. We have to lobby from every angle in order that issues are addressed.</p> <p><u>Action page 11:</u> Adrian Orr and Christina Lewis to speak outside the meeting to see if a working group would be helpful early years challenges and sufficiency?</p> <p>A conversation took place, including Allan Cadzow, it was decided to seek a view from the sector about an additional working group. Christina Lewis is raising with the sector at their forum meeting this term.</p> <p><u>Action page 14:</u> Adrian Orr to compile questions and comments raised by Forum members. ALL to submit</p>

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		<p>any further evidence to AO by email after the meeting.</p> <p>Adrian Orr stated very helpful feedback and thanks to Forum members who sent through information. At the January meeting Mary Evans, our former Cabinet Member and F40 Executive, had a request to collect some real-life cases of the impact of covid and funding in general. Some colleagues in this meeting may also be members of the F40 group so will have seen that at the F40 Group meeting of 8 March Mary Evans raised issues around SEND funding and the contributions that forum members sent following the last Forum meeting. Adrian Orr expressed thanks to all who sent through contributions. These also formed part of submission that F40 group put to MPs and Department for Education. Colleagues will know that we have an ongoing engagement with the F40 group and how they lobby for the lowest funded 40 local authorities in the country for better funding.</p> <p><u>Action Page 15</u>: DSG recovery plan – which is on today’s agenda.</p>
4.	Term of Office – Task and Finish Group Update	<p>What is the Forum being asked to decide?</p> <p>There is no formal decision making, this paper is to share information with forum from the Term of Office Task and Finish Group.</p> <p>Adrian Orr (AO) introduced this item.</p> <p>Thanks to colleagues who joined the T&G group some of whom who are here and to those who have now moved on.</p> <p>At the January Forum meeting we voted on a four-year term of office for School Forum members. The term of office arrangements sit with the LA, we could just decide them but we like to work in a collaborative and collegiate way.</p> <p>The Task and Finish Group looked at a couple of issues that we needed to address.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. We have six members of forum, who were long term members and joined before we had formal voting arrangements in place. We needed to come up with a fair and transparent way around

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		<p>their term of office. We had a really helpful and meaningful debate and came to the view that those Forum members term of office would run until December 2021. They would then be able to stand again and this would align to the proper election process for forum members.</p> <p>2. Representation on forum: we came to a view that forum very much represents the range of leadership and governance across the whole Suffolk sector and its incumbent to us all to work in our individual settings as well as collectively to see as far as we can that we have a forum that represents the people of Suffolk and that also we need the expertise that Governors, Trust Board members, CEOs and headteachers bring. We also agreed that we need to refresh and review the induction programme for new forum members.</p> <p>3. We will be running maintained elections around that in the autumn term to fill the vacancies due to retirement. We are also happy to offer an election process to the Academy sector if they would like us to run their election as there will be academy vacancies too. In addition to putting new induction arrangements in place we are seeking volunteers from forum who could act as mentors to new forum members in their first year on forum.</p> <p>If you are interested in becoming a mentor for new forum members please contact Adrian Orr.</p> <p><u>Questions raised by Forum:</u></p> <p>Sharon Waldron: Is there a reference document explaining the induction process that the panel feel you would like to be covered?</p> <p><i>There is some out-of-date documentation, which we will redraft over the summer to have something more up to date and robust.</i></p> <p>Andrew Berry: There was also a focus on encouragement of governance members for putting themselves forward to SF.</p>

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		<p><i>The real importance of retaining a balance on Forum of School Leaders, Trust Leaders but also Governors and Trust Board Members. A real strength of Forum members over a number of years has been that balance of leadership and governance and we felt that could be a risk that that could shift. Therefore, in the election process and in the process prior to an election, we will go out more widely to governors and trust board members to try to ensure that we retain that valuable balance of members.</i></p> <p>Alison Bowman – We did discuss raising this at Governor meetings.</p> <p><i>Yes, we did say we would raise this at governor briefings and that would be one route to help promote when the election process starts to get out via a number of channels to make sure that anyone who is eligible to put themselves forward as a nominee.</i></p> <p><u>ACTION:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forum members to email Adrian Orr if they are interested in acting as a mentor for the first year for new members.
5.	Approval of Element of CSSB Savings 2022-2023	<p>What is the Forum being asked to decide?</p> <p>In response to the £0.847m grant reduction to be imposed by the DfE in 2022-23 in relation to services funded by the CSSB, agree the described savings proposals of £0.534m, which are the result of work of Local Authority Officers and shared with the Schools Forum sub-group.</p> <p>Reason for recommendation</p> <p>The DfE are reducing the on-going historical commitments element of the CSSB by 20% a year, with 2022-23 being the third year of such a reduction. Funding challenges for the local authority mean that this loss of grant income cannot currently be identified without savings made elsewhere within the Council. Therefore, the services provided to schools funded by the CSSB currently will need to be delivered potentially under a different model, or where this is not possible, the services would cease, and schools would need to source individually.</p>

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		<p>These initial savings proposals do not lead to any reduction in services that schools currently receive, and by agreeing these now gives the Local Authority a clear steer of what remaining budget reductions need to be identified and proposed to Schools Forum in advance of the 2022-23 financial year at the October Schools Forum meeting.</p> <p>Sonya Harban (SH) introduced this item.</p> <p>2022-23 is the third year that we have had to fund 20% savings from services that support schools through the CSSB. The DSG guidance that we have to follow means that all commitments funded from the historical elements of the grant have to be agreed by forum on a line-by-line basis and we will do this as normal at our October meeting.</p> <p>Sonya would like to thank the members of the CSSB Working Group who have responded to suggestions and therefore helped shape this paper. Prior to the meeting in October Sonya wanted to share with Forum some ways to find some of those savings so this paper is recommending a way that £0.534m of the total £0.847m that we need to find can be met. It sets out to Forum how officers are working on how the target could be achieved and the details are being agreed by senior officers, particularly in the Education, Skills and Learning and Early Help teams. The savings in this paper will ensure that there is no change in the services that schools receive through activities funded by the CSSB and in addition it is the intention of the Corporate Director for CYP, Allan Cadzow to raise the funding issue with the SCC Corporate Leadership Team and the council's Joint Leadership Team. The DCS will be setting out the impact of losing this important source of funding and how this will effect children, families and schools. It is hoped that central resources could be used to meet this need.</p> <p>However, given the financial position on the local authority and as we are likely to have another 1-year financial settlement this year, we need to be prepared that this may be unachievable.</p> <p><u>Questions raised by Forum members:</u></p>

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		<p>Peter Collins – CSSB block seems a bit opaque and we do not see much detail about that it covers and ideally would like that explained. But also looking at the proposal are you not putting more pressure on the budget by moving that extra cost into it. Concerns that this will impact on SEN children.</p> <p><i>Sonya: CSSB is one of 4 blocks of funding from DSG, there are two elements of this. The first being the statutory element (previously known as ESG): which supports our admissions teams, infrastructure and planning) which is secure. The other part of the funding is for the historically agreed commitments, which are commitments which Schools Forum have agreed that we would be supporting through that block of funding that ensure schools get certain services which support the early help team and all of these services are explained in detail at our October meeting where we vote on those. We will send you the link to last November's CSSB paper which will give you all the details of what those services provide as we have a whole annex, and each service is described in detail.</i></p> <p><i>High Needs Block – what we are trying to do is look at the funding, DSG has to be spent on certain things and what we are able to do is use the DSG so the high needs block guidance does allow the current activity that is being funded from the CSSB to be funded by the HNB and in the context of the overall materiality its only a small amount so the overall HNB is about roughly 75m (before the recoupment for academies) so we are talking about £90,000 which we are taking from core funding in effect to support the DSG.</i></p> <p><i>It does add pressure on the HNB however, I have been working with Gemma Morgan who is our SEND Head of Funding and that has been taking into account in the DSG Deficit Recovery Plan and we are still rather hopeful that this will get a good settlement next year which will find out about next month in July and we are hoping for is that there will be that capacity in the HNB to cover that funding. Otherwise we will have to make decisions on having to reduce some of our HNB activities or costs and that will only be a detriment to the services that we provide, but</i></p>

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		<p><i>what we are trying to do is protect the services for the very most vulnerable children, in the past the working group have been very clear that we really need to protect what we can particularly our early help teams some of that the early intervention work which is really supporting schools but we are mindful at the end of the day that all of this funding is going to go and so it's the case of how we plan those reductions and the reduction in cost rather than it won't happen and work out/identify other sources of funding that could cover that.</i></p> <p><i>Chair commented that CSSB has been one of the recurring issues since we had the announcement that this funding pot will disappear, we are not using it for anything else, this funding stream is going and we only have limited ways that we can find to cover the costs of what was previously covered by CSSB.</i></p> <p><i>Adrian Orr: CSSB is a is a complex area. I would recommend looking at previous forum papers on Suffolk Learning. We are going to harvest some of those previous papers to be part of the induction pack, even though CSSB is going, but we need to put some headline FAQs around.</i></p> <p><i>Julia Upton – SEND saving and clarification point 14 subsequent year savings, they are further savings?</i></p> <p><i>20% CSSB historical savings every year – concern being that in one of those years they could take it all away, so that's the real difficulty with planning that we have to plan on this 20% but we may get 6 months notice that next year they could take it all away. It's quite difficult to try and come up with a redesign or see how we can restructure services, so we just need to be aware of that. Hopeful that with Allan and our new cabinet members backing, we can try and get some of that shown as a corporate risk.</i></p> <p><i>Alison Bowman - have they given any indication as to how the statutory part will be funded when the CSSB goes in probably 2 more years?</i></p> <p><i>Statutory element will continue and will go up depending on our pupil numbers, but because Suffolk were quite low on that, our actual element of that is increased but what it also needs to cover is the</i></p>

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		<p><i>statutory element that we use, e.g. admissions team they will get pay inflation so any increase in the statutory element would help the additional costs each year that we get for those teams which also include the planning team and infrastructure team.</i></p> <p>Vote took place by all Forum Members:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In response to the £0.847m grant reduction to be imposed by the DfE in 2022-23 in relation to services funded by the CSSB, do you agree the described savings proposals of £0.534m, which are the result of work of Local Authority Officers and shared with the Schools Forum sub-group. <p>A vote took place by all members.</p> <p>After voting 14 forum members in favour, 0 members against and 0 abstained.</p> <p><u>ACTION:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teresa Spilling to send Peter Collins November's CSSB paper and link to Suffolk Learning which contains all previous CSSB reports.
6.	DSG Deficit Recovery Plan for Suffolk	<p>To share with Schools' Forum the updated DSG Deficit Recovery Plan. This plan will be shared with Forum on a termly basis.</p> <p>To inform Schools' Forum of the predicted overspend in future years.</p> <p>Reason for recommendation The DSG Deficit Recovery Plan was prepared following the decision taken at Schools Forum for 0.5% of the School's Block to contribute to the High Needs deficit recovery. The plan is updated regularly to reflect actual and predicted costs and will continue to be shared with Forum on a termly basis.</p> <p>Who will be affected by this decision? This situation affects all education providers in Suffolk.</p> <p>Allan Cadzow (AC) introduced this item.</p>

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		<p>Over the past 6 months we have seen an unprecedented demand for SEND Places in Suffolk, with weekly referrals from Mainstream Schools increasing to between 80-120 per week. The specialist settings within the Local Offer are filling up and we are finding ourselves in a position where we do not have enough places for all of the children who are being referred. This increase in demand has made the modelling for the future provision requirements more challenging than ever, meaning that we can expect differences in what we currently predict to actual activity over the next 4 years. It is unclear at this time whether this increase in demand is a direct impact of the pandemic, but it can be surmised that it has had a negative effect on the needs of Suffolk children.</p> <p>The Local Authority has a critical role placing children with SEND into Specialist Provision, however this is a whole system challenge. If schools continue to make referrals as they do then the whole system will need to be reviewed in order to reach a more manageable position. This is a collective challenge to the system and we need to be clear that it is one that we need to address together. It is also worth noting that the DSG Guidance states that we are not allowed to use core-funding to fund SEND and therefore are unable to get additional funding from other areas of the Local Authority.</p> <p>The data we used for previous predictions was accurate at the time, however, since the October Schools Forum the rise in demand has been unexpected. The figures used within this current paper are modelled on a middle ground between the worst and best case scenarios.</p> <p>Allan Cadzow handed over to Gemma Morgan (GMn), Head of SEND Funding and Provider Services at this point.</p> <p>With regards to this paper there were two points to share with you: DSG Deficit Recovery Plan and also inform you of predicted overspend in future years.</p> <p>Gemma was hoping to circulate a copy of the updated DSG recovery plan. At the moment the version that was sent out October/November still stands and we</p>

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		<p>are updating it to reflect any changes, none of the narrative has changed, but we want to make sure the figures are accurate. The recovery of the deficit will continue as it did in the paper in the Autumn, but we would like to amend and make sure use we are using the ESFA latest template, which had cell errors. Mike Quinton is busy working on getting an updated template prepared. Therefore, apologies that we do not have a version of this to show you at the moment. ESFA have sent version 36 of the plan so we can get that updated and share with the minutes.</p> <p>Once circulated should you have any issues with the template, please email Gemma Morgan who will respond to you.</p> <p>Whilst working on the DSG recovery plan, and taking into consideration all that Allan Cadzow has talked about this morning, the unprecedented demand, the pressure we are seeing through our admissions panels, we have looked at what we can predict for the future years and that has meant that we are looking at a potential £3.1m overspend for the current financial year. We are optimistic that we will get a settlement in July and from the ESFA which will cover that but we don't know that at the moment.</p> <p>We wanted to update you on the situation and make you aware of our predictions for the three years, so that if we do not get a settlement we expect in July, we will come back in October with a plan and next steps that may include what we have discussed previously, asking for more money or looking at reducing the top up band values.</p> <p><u>Questions raised by Forum members:</u></p> <p>Sharon Waldron: concerns about SEND especially as this provision is currently being audited for its capacity to support Suffolk families. I am worried for the children in Suffolk.</p> <p><i>We do continue to lobby the fact that are an underfunded LA and we have recently completed a consultation on how funding for high needs would be calculated moving forward which Gemma Morgan, Sonya Harban and Mike Quinton have contributed to that and made it quite clear that as an underfunded LA</i></p>

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		<p><i>we need to use recent data in order to set our budgets moving forward.</i></p> <p>Chair commented we have been having this conversation for several years now.</p> <p><i>Sonya: If Suffolk was funded at the LA average per head in the HNB we would not have a deficit position.</i></p> <p>Cllr Rachel Hood, in attendance for her first Forum meeting as the new Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and SEND commented that since taking up this role was aware of the fact that Suffolk are so underfunded in certain areas and in particular in the SEND area and that Allan, Gemma and the team are doing a tremendous job. I see part of my role as trying to alleviate this lack of funding per pupil and I can't promise that I can solve anything but I will certainly be trying because it's a recurring theme and I appreciate everybody's concern so thank you for letting me mention that here.</p> <p>Chair commented this has been an anomaly for a very long time and several years ago when we knew that the new national funding formulas were being considered we saw that as perhaps an opportunity that the DfE would take to make sure there was a level playing field but we still seem to be a long way from that unfortunately. Any lobbying you can do Cllr Hood would be much appreciated thank you.</p>
7.	SEND Provision Infographic	<p>To share with Schools' Forum a first draft of a newly created infographic which demonstrates the growth in demand for Specialist Education places in Suffolk.</p> <p>Gemma Morgan (GMn) introduced this item.</p> <p>It was discussed at CYP DMT that we should have an infographic which demonstrates all the work that is going on in the background. All the places we are creating and making in settings and to show the rise in trajectory of need for places and how it looks in comparison with some of the other LAs and how the funding has increased. The infographic circulated with the agenda is for information. Forum to let us know if it contains the right information or whether you would like other information included. It was</p>

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		<p>noted that there was an error under the top up figures graph which states 'mainstream schools' should be 'maintained mainstream schools' as we have academies and free schools further along in the graph.</p> <p>Forum members raised the following questions/comments:</p> <p>Alison Bowman: I have tried lobbying my MP to limited effect but Mary was meeting with some of them - has this gone any further?</p> <p><i>Adrian Orr: Cllr Mary Evans and Cllr Gordon Jones did a briefing and met with a number of local MPs, but not all Suffolk MPs attended. Some of the information that I referred to earlier around the information that forum members had provided was also used as part of that briefing.</i></p> <p>Sharon Waldron: A useful tool to share the full picture of SEND in Suffolk.</p> <p>Julia Upton: Helpful infographic, on the bands table are these pupil numbers? Might be helpful to have pupil numbers and the monies received for each band (year on year comparison).</p> <p><i>Gemma Morgan to take this away and see how we can merge some of that information.</i></p> <p>The infographic can be made available to all schools.</p> <p>Chair thanked Gemma for her team for all the detailed modelling that is being done in difficult circumstances and the unprecedented number of referrals that have been coming through in the last few months. I know that Gemma and the team would like to do more for SEND pupils if we had the resources to do so.</p> <p><u>ACTION:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forum members to email Gemma Morgan with any additional information they would like to see on the Infographic. • Gemma Morgan to speak with Allan Cadzow outside the meeting with regards

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		to extra thoughts around the infographic
8.	Forward Agenda	<u>October</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DSG Outturn 2020-21 • CSSB • DSG Deficit Recovery Plan Update • Growth
9.	AOB	<p>Chair passed on her thanks to our members who are leaving Forum: Angela Berry, Louise Spall and Karen Mills – thank you for their contributions to Forum meetings and giving up their time to read and digest papers which has always been much appreciated.</p> <p>Do members have a preference on whether to continue with virtual or face to face meetings. The majority of members would like to continue with virtual meetings as its more efficient as it eliminates travel time and is much greener. However, we will review this as meetings continue.</p>
10.	Date of the next meeting	The next meeting is confirmed as Thursday 7 October 2021, 9.30am Microsoft Teams (and live streamed through YouTube).
		Meeting closed at 10.30am.