

**Minutes of the Suffolk Schools' Forum held at 9.30am on Thursday 13 January 2022 via Microsoft Teams (and live streamed through YouTube)**

**Present:**

<b>Non-School Members</b>	Colin Shaw, 16-19 Provider Amanda Havers, PVI Maria Kemble, Diocesan Pat Chapman, PVI
<b>Academy Members</b>	Andrew Berry, Mainstream Darren Woodward, Mainstream Angelo Goduti, Mainstream Wendy James, Mainstream Paul Fykin, Mainstream Sue Prickett, Special Angela Ransby, AP Provision
<b>Maintained School Members</b>	Allison Coleman, Primary (Chair) Robert Lenko, Secondary Rowena Mackie, Secondary Karen Lodge, PRU

**Observers and Local Authority**

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

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1.	Welcome – Virtual Meeting Etiquette	<p>Adrian Orr led the start of the meeting until the election of a Chair for Forum.</p> <p>Adrian welcomed members to Forum.</p> <p>At the last meeting we said farewell to a number of colleagues and today welcome new members Angelo Goduti, Gemma Andrews, Paul Fykin and Wendy James who are Academy members and Robert Lenko who is a maintained school member.</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"> <li>• Daniel Jones, Gemma Andrews and Ruth Coleman.</li> </ul> <p>Pat Chapman viewed via YouTube due to technical issues but was able to join the meeting for Paper D Early Years Funding Rates 2022-23 item.</p>
3.	Term of Office – incl. voting in Chair and Vice Chair	<p>This item was introduced by Adrian Orr, Assistant Director Education, Skills and learning for Forum to agree that the term of office for the chair and vice chair of Schools' Forum should be 2 years.</p> <p>Thanks were given to Andrew Berry who assisted Adrian draft this paper</p> <p>Voting took place by all Forum members:</p> <p>To agree that the term of office for the chair and vice chair of Schools' Forum should be 2 years?</p> <p>After voting <b>13 forum members in favour, 0 members against.</b></p> <p>A further vote took place to vote in a new Chair of Forum.</p> <p>Allison Coleman has put herself forward for consideration.</p> <p>After voting <b>13 forum members in favour, 0</b></p>

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		<p><b>members against.</b></p> <p>Congratulations to Allison Coleman, who is our Chair of Forum. Adrian Orr handed the meeting over to Allison at this point.</p> <p>Allison commented that she will continue to chair these meetings to the best of her ability as she has done before and her ethos is to always try and give everybody the opportunity to put forward their thoughts on the way that any proposal will impact on their particular phase or setting whether you are an academy, maintained, post-16 or early years as we want to hear all voices. But the most important thing is that collectively, when Forum comes to vote on any proposal, we consider what is most appropriate for all pupils in Suffolk. It is irrelevant at that point as to what the impact is on our own settings as we need to make decisions that are best for the pupils in Suffolk. In the past Forum members have all followed this ethos and hope going forward we will continue to do that as well.</p> <p>Forum to agree the Vice-Chair of these meetings as no interest has been received outside of this meeting for consideration, therefore Chair is seeking interest at this meeting.</p> <p>Robert Lenko, Governor at Thurston Community College has offered to stand as Vice Chair.</p> <p>Robert, Allison and Adrian to have a meeting outside of Forum to see how they can support Robert as he is also a new member of Forum.</p>
4.	Minutes of the previous meeting & issues arising	The minutes of the previous meeting held on 30 November 2021 were agreed and signed off by the Chair.
5.	DSG Forecast Outturn 2021-22	<p>Schools Forum are asked to note the current DSG forecast outturn for 2021-22, and the impact this will have on the DSG reserve position if both DSG funding and spending remain unchanged this financial year.</p> <p>Sonya Harban, Strategic Finance Lead for Children and Young People led on this report. Sonya manages the team who supports not only the budget managers</p>

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		<p>within the council who manage core funding and other grants but also the school budgets and budget setting process, known as School Accountancy Team and you'll be particularly familiar with Mike Quinton who will be presenting the school budget paper later in this meeting.</p> <p>In order to ensure there's transparency of spending the DSG block we are intending to provide updated forecasts more often than has been in the past. Quarter one was shared at Forum in October, because at that point quarter two had not been updated and so this forecast takes into account the known and projected commitments for the year up to the 30<sup>th</sup> November, which is when our quarter three was based on.</p> <p>You'll see there's an increase in the overspend forecast and the vast majority of this is a result of the additional demand in SEND. Much of this was only actually evidenced over the summer holidays, when schools returned for the new academic term, and so weren't forecast by the service in the first quarter reporting. However, the level of overspend against the high needs block budget is due to the level of underfunding received in Suffolk, to give context about that, the 2021-22 high needs block funding for Suffolk per pupil is £896 compared to a stat neighbour average of £932 and our colleagues in Norfolk receive £952 per pupil. Therefore, if Suffolk had received the same level of historical spend funding per head over the last three years as Norfolk, which is both the regional and a statistical neighbour of ours then Suffolk would not have a DSG deficit.</p> <p>As it stands, we've got a total DSG deficit at the beginning of this financial year of 12.7m and which, despite the disparity in funding, is still significantly less than Norfolk's, which at the beginning of the year, was 31.8m. The original projected minimum rise nationally for high needs block for 2022-23 was originally 8%, Suffolk had been due to receive close to the minimum at 8.08%, while Norfolk's increase is just over 11%, which increases the gap even further. Although there's been some good news since then in that there has been an additional 4.2% agreed nationally and it looks like that is going to be permanent and we have very recently, in fact yesterday, received indications of what</p>

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		<p>we should budget for 2023-24 and onwards as well, which is 5%, 3%, 3%.</p> <p>The Inclusion Service are looking at how the levels of our current commitments and expected demand in 2022-23 are likely to impact on the DSG reserve and that will be information that Gemma Morgan will share with Forum in April, but hopefully that has given you a bit of context and overview.</p> <p>Question raised by Robert Lenko: Why is there such a disparity with Norfolk?</p> <p><i>SH responded: It's a really good question, Robert. You'll hear lots about this in your tenure on the Schools' Forum, and basically how the high needs block is made up. There's a significant element that is based on historical commitments, and because in 2017-18, which was when the baseline they use was established, Suffolk was a significantly low spending county, unfortunately that has now formed the level of our overall budget going forward.</i></p> <p><i>Along with our Cabinet member, Councillor Rachel Hood, who is on the call, we are spending a lot of time lobbying our MPs and ministers about the unfairness of that. We absolutely understand where there are evidential factors around IDACI deprivation and disability that authorities perhaps need more funding for those. We don't think it's fair that over 30% of the budget is based on historical spend and that's why we are so low compared to Norfolk, who are very high and still remain high.</i></p>
6.	Early Years Funding Rates 2022-23	<p>Christina Lewis, Head of Service, Early Years and Childcare led on this report.</p> <p>Forum are being asked to agree passing through all of the increase that has been announced by the government for early years funding in the form of an increase in the hourly rate. This means that the local authority will continue not to retain the full amount that they can, so that we maximize the amount that we pass through to providers. We do have an early years providers forum and the consultative forum have said that they feel the best way is to continue to add it to the hourly rate because that way most people benefit from it rather than relooking at the formula and</p>

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		<p>changing the percentages for how much we put into inclusion and deprivation, which is a tiny amount as we tend to pass most of it through into the hourly rate, We are still low funded and we will continue to try and raise that with the government and with the DfE. This is the maximum that we can give providers at the moment, therefore seeking Forum's approval to take this course of action.</p> <p>Amanda Havers: I would like to support Christina's paper from the early years providers point of view. Providers are always very appreciative of any increase and particularly appreciative of the LA proposing to pass all of that increase through to providers. I would just like to highlight those costs are increasing significantly too which presents some challenges to us as a sector.</p> <p>Vote took place by all Forum members.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To agree the pass through to early years providers of an additional 21 pence per hour for eligible 2 year olds.</li> </ol> <p><b>After voting 13 forum members in favour, 0 members against and 0 abstained.</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. To agree the pass through to early years providers of an additional 17 pence per hour for 3 &amp; 4 year olds.</li> </ol> <p><b>After voting 13* forum members in favour, 0 members against and 0 abstained.</b> *Verbal vote received in favour by Pat Chapman</p>
7.	Schools Block Funding Submission 2021-22	<p>This paper was introduced by Michael Quinton, Senior Accountant working for the Children and Young People's Directorate supporting Sonya and predominantly school finances.</p> <p>This paper is an update on the paper presented at the November meeting and it provides an update on the schools block funding submission for 2022-23.</p> <p>At the previous meeting Forum agreed to continue to follow the National Funding Formula and forum have done that for the past six years. For those new to forum the national funding formula is it's the method</p>

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		<p>that the government uses to allocate money to all schools in England each year and what it aims to do is remove any discrepancies arising from budgets, allocated from different local authorities. Back in 2010-11, we had 39 factors that were used to allocate funding to our schools in Suffolk. The government have reduced this to 12 factors that we use, but there are exceptional factors that we can still apply to the Secretary of State for, e.g. rent and split sites where a number of our schools still qualify for that. You can see straight away that reducing it to 12 makes it a consistent approach and Forum thought this was the best way forward for Suffolk. It ensures that all of our schools are funded in exactly the same way, and when the national funding formula is eventually implemented in full, we are ready for the transition from the soft national funding formula at the moment. When it is implemented in full, Suffolk will be in a good position, there shouldn't be any sort of turbulence in the system where we have to change the way that we issue funding to schools. Forum made a good decision back in 2017-18 to follow the national funding formula.</p> <p>The updated October census information was available on 16 December, so it's quite tight turnaround from getting the information to getting it supplied back to the ESFA by the deadline of 21 January.</p> <p>Page 2: table one gives a breakdown of how the funding comes in. The main elements of the funding is via the unit funding levels for the primary and secondary schools and the number of pupils that we have recorded on the census in October 2021.</p> <p>There is additional funding for the premises factors such as rates, split sites and rent and we also get an element of funding through growth, where the DfE look at what the pupil numbers were in the previous year, the current year and an element of growth applied to that. We received £2.4 million growth funding 2022-23, but we will only use £1.78m of that for our growth funding for our schools. Additional funding is going into the schools block this year, which is good news for schools, but that's something that we need to discuss further, the growth paper will be coming to Schools' Forum in April.</p>

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		<p>The agreed 0.5% transfer to support the high needs block deficit, which is just under £2.4m. The rates as we know are changing this year, ESFA will be paying rates on schools' behalf, the rates go into the schools' budgets and then come out when the ESFA pay for it next year. More information will follow in the school budget commentary in February. The ESFA will be communicating with our Academy schools.</p> <p>Overall Suffolk for 2022-23 we had just over £478m to allocate to our schools, just over 3% increase on what we allocated in 2021-22.</p> <p>Good news, but not great news for Suffolk, as we all know, we are still a low funded local authority, so we're still in the lowest quartile of authorities for schools block funding.</p> <p>Paragraph 8 shows as part of the spending review in the autumn, DfE have confirmed that there be some additional funding coming out to schools. For Suffolk, this is going to be in the region of £14m additional funding as a separate grant in 2022-23. More details will be known in the spring term on how that will be allocated.</p> <p>Some rates for schools have been published for next year: <a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/schools-supplementary-grant-2022-to-2023/schools-supplementary-grant-2022-to-2023-methodology">https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/schools-supplementary-grant-2022-to-2023/schools-supplementary-grant-2022-to-2023-methodology</a>.</p> <p>There are rates for early years provision in schools for 5-16 cohort, and post-16 provision. This will help your finance staff looking at budgets for next financial year. With the additional £14m worth of funding coming in next year, that equates to a 6.4% increase in cash terms and per pupil works out at slightly less at 6.1%.</p> <p>With regards to sparsity funding, this was something that Schools' Forum agreed to implement back in 2014, to help support small and rural schools where they don't get the economies of scale like some of bigger urban schools get with regards to deprivation funding and low prior attainment. A lot of rural and small schools missed out on that funding. Sparsity was a way of getting some additional funding into those schools and how it used to work, was the DfE would calculate a threshold distance, if the closest second school was more than two miles away, for</p>



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		<p>example, then that school would be eligible for some funding. This was done on a crow flies method, which wasn't really fair or transparent, so the methodology this year has changed to the actual road distance. We have found that more schools benefit from this because as we know that road distances are a bit longer than a crow flying in the air. In paragraph 9 we allocated just under £1.6m last year to schools through the sparsity factor and it's increased to £3.4m next year.</p> <p>The number of schools benefitting from this factor has increased significantly, 32 this year to 87 for 2022-23. Good news to help support them in what we know are very difficult times at the moment with the pandemic still hitting our schools. Although this is additional funding for those schools, it's not additional funding for Suffolk, in the overall quantum of funding that we receive the £478m and the £3m comes out of that funding.</p> <p>Paragraph 11 shows there are 82 schools on the minimum per pupil funding for 2022-23, this is where schools don't reach that threshold of the bullet points just under paragraph 11. If a primary school, for example, only hits £4000 per pupil, for their per pupil led factors, then they would be topped up £265 per pupil to get back to that level in simplistic terms.</p> <p>We have less schools on the minimum per pupil funding than last year. Each year you would expect the number of schools on the minimum per pupil funding to reduce. When comparing with other local authorities, you can see that the schools on minimum per pupil funding far outweighs what we're on in Suffolk and you can see that our consistent approach is working.</p> <p>Finally, paragraph 12, there are some increases to pupil premium, which is good for those pupils that are eligible for that.</p> <p>Questions raised by Forum:</p> <p>What are the 12 factors you can see in the annex A?  <i>You can see the 12 factors that are permitted and then you can see those exceptional factors that can be used and rent being one that we use in Suffolk.</i></p>

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		<p>How will the rates for supplementary grants be decided for Special Schools? Will the grants come via the LA?</p> <p><i>There is not a supplementary grant for special schools, there is an additional £3.4m for the high needs block and Gemma Morgan, Sonya Harban and Mike Quinton are looking at how funding is allocated. HNB essentially the LA decide how that is distributed but we have the high needs working group and forum so there will be some consultation on how best we use that additional funding in the high needs block.</i></p> <p><i>Gemma Morgan commented that the funding brings us up what we do need to meet demand before we go into further deficit, looking at the calculations that money would cover the increase in demand that we have seen in Suffolk over the last 2 years.</i></p> <p>What about additional funding for PRUs? <i>This is exactly the same. Gemma will be working with various groups to see what can be done.</i></p> <p>The increased National Insurance Levy? <i>At the moment there is nothing in the guidance about additional funding for the increase in national insurance and I think the line is that schools and high needs providers need to soak this up from current budgets that's the expectation from the DfE and the ESFA.</i></p>
8.	Forward Agenda	<p><u>April</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Update on SEND</li> <li>• Schools Growth Policy</li> <li>• Terms of Reference</li> <li>• DSG verbal update</li> </ul>
9.	AOB	None.
10.	Date of the next meeting	The next meeting is confirmed as <b>Thursday 28 April 2022, 9.30am Microsoft Teams (and live streamed through YouTube).</b>
		Chair thanked members for attending and hopes it wasn't too overwhelming for new members with all the jargon that inevitably happens here at Schools' Forum. Chair recommends looking at some previous

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		<p>papers as background reading which you might find helpful: <a href="#">Schools Forum – Suffolk Learning</a></p> <p>Thank you all very much for attending the meeting this morning and I now close the meeting.</p> <p>Meeting closed at 10:20am.</p>