

Minutes of the Suffolk Schools' Forum held at 9.30am on Thursday 30 June 2022 via Microsoft Teams (and live streamed through YouTube)

Present:

Non-School Members	Colin Shaw, 16-19 Provider Amanda Havers, PVI
Academy Members	Andrew Berry, Mainstream Darren Woodward, Mainstream Angelo Goduti, Mainstream Paul Fykin, Mainstream Gemma Andrews, Mainstream Angela Ransby, AP Provision
Maintained School Members	Allison Coleman, Primary (Chair) Rowena Mackie, Secondary Karen Lodge, PRU Ruth Coleman, Nursery

Observers and Local Authority

Observers	There were observers present at the meeting
Local Authority	Allan Cadzow Adrian Orr Ros Somerville Gemma Morgan Mike Quinton Pete Mumford Christina Lewis Teresa Spilling Barbara Barraclough

Item No.	Item Description	
1.	Welcome – Virtual Meeting Etiquette	<p>Chair welcomed members to the meeting.</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"> • Sue Prickett, Pat Chapman, Daniel Jones, Cllr Rachel Hood, Maria Kemble and Robert Lenko.
3.	Minutes of the previous meeting & issues arising	<p>The minutes of the previous meeting held on 13 January 2022 were agreed as an accurate reflection of the meeting and signed off by the Chair. There were no matters arising or actions from these minutes so nothing to report on in terms of updates.</p>
4.	High Needs Funding and Additional High Needs Funding	<p>Gemma Morgan, Head of SEND Funding and Provider Services in attendance for this item.</p> <p>This paper was due to come to Forum in April, but unfortunately due to illness was unable to attend so it was moved to this meeting.</p> <p>There are three sections to this paper:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To share with Schools’ Forum the current spending of the 2021/22 High Needs Block allocation and the expected spend for 2022/23. • To share with Schools’ Forum information regarding the 2022/23 Additional Funding received from the Department for Education (DfE) and ask Schools Forum to vote on the use of this funding. • Inform Schools Forum of Delivering Better Value in SEND. <p>We continue to see a rise in demand for specialist places and will keep you updated as the year continues. The end of year position for the high needs block was just over 7.5m and this paper goes through the details of what this was based on and why this was the position.</p> <p>Questions were raised by Forum members with</p>

Item No.	Item Description	
		<p>regards to this report.</p> <p>Chair commented that this question is specifically saying ‘Do Schools Forum agree today that an initial tranche that would cover the NI costs for specials and PRUs’ that we are voting on and that we will bring back another paper to the October meeting to consider or not that we vote on an additional tranche of funding for special schools and PRUs from this grant funding pot.</p> <p>A vote took place by Forum members:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Do you agree to move on the proposals to use the additional funding as described in Paper B before further guidance on the use of the funding is published? <p>After voting 10 forum members in favour, 2 members against.</p> <p>Thank you to everyone who has voted, we have 83% in favour and 16% against out of the 12 responses received.</p> <p>It is therefore agreed that this initial tranche of funding for special schools and PRUs to cover their NI costs has been agreed by schools forum on the basis that there will be another paper coming to the October meeting. This will follow a meeting of the High Needs Working Group where the use of the Additional Funding will be explained to the group and to consider the additional costs pressures faced by special schools and PRUs.</p> <p>The annual contribution vote will take place at the October meeting when we could do it as a broader question. The DfE are in the process of putting in much stricter guidelines about how this funding is spent so that might supersede that question, but as yet this has not been received.</p>
5.	DSG Spend 2021-22 and 2022-23 Forecast	<p>Mike Quinton, Senior Accountant - CYP presented this report as Sonya Harban, Strategic Lead for Finance is currently on leave.</p> <p>Page 2, Table 1, overall last year we had 5.250m</p>

Item No.	Item Description	
		<p>overspend on DSG the majority of this was the HNB which Gemma has already identified. Underspend on the regulatory and other statutory duties this is because we had an increase last year but we have decided to use some of those underspends and savings on the CSSB element which is the 20% reduction that we are seeing year on year. We also had an underspend on the early years block, the early years block is funding on actual uptake in places so the £918,000 underspend isn't a real £918,000 underspend as we get adjustments in the following year. We are waiting on that at the end of July to see what the actual allocation was for 2021-22. There was a massive increase in January 2022 on the uptake of early years places especially 3 and 4 year olds; there was a 17% increase on January 2021 census because parents are more confident in the covid situation at the moment and parents are going back into the office, therefore, we put a reserve movement in of 2.1m because that's what we think the adjustment will be. For 2021-22 we think the allocation for Early Years will be around 38m. Mike, Sonya and Christina will look and see what that means for Early Years Providers and have a discussion to see how we can possibly divert some of that surplus out to our providers.</p> <p>Small underspends on rates and recoupment, where academy conversations take place and the EFSA recoup rates based on any point of the year. We did have an underspend on the growth fund last year which was because we had a lot of schools who had entered their final year of growing effect so we did make an underspend there, but moving forward we have a lot of new schools and housing developments, so in the future the growth will be near or overspent against that 1.78m. Already this year we are very close to that with new schools in the pipeline and lots of growth in our primary and secondary schools.</p> <p>For 2022-23 as its so early in the new financial year the only overspend we are reporting at the moment is on the high needs block and as Gemma said she thinks that has increased to 5.5m rather than 5.2m.</p> <p>Table 5 and 6 is just to highlight that Suffolk is really underfunded compared with its regional neighbours. Table 6 you can see the element of the historical</p>

Item No.	Item Description	
		<p>funding. 2017-18 we tried to keep within the budget allocated to Suffolk, but this has penalised us moving forward. We have gone back to the DfE to say that's not an appropriate measure to allocate funding in 2021-22 and 2023-24. Norfolk have got very similar demographics to Suffolk, but they have got more pupils which is why they get a slight increase in funding but overall, the difference between the £280 per pupil and £371 is £8m per year. We need to keep highlighting that fact and Cllr Rachel Hood is still having conversations with MPs.</p> <p>Questions were raised by Forum members.</p>
6.	Growth and Falling Rolls Funding	<p>Mike Quinton, Senior Service Accountant and Pete Mumford, Head of Schools Infrastructure in attendance for this item.</p> <p>Schools Forum is being asked to decide if it would be appropriate to amend Suffolk's growth policy to include a falling rolls fund from 2023-24 following on from earlier discussions.</p> <p>The purpose of this fund is to provide financial support to schools where there is a temporary fall in pupil numbers, but numbers are forecast to recover back to previous levels within 3 years. The funding is designed to support schools to avoid the need to take costly actions to reduce their capacity when demographic data shows capacity will recover in the near future.</p> <p>As this funding is within the schools block, any movement of funding from the schools formula into the growth fund would not be treated as a transfer between blocks. The schools forum would still need to agree the total growth fund each year as part of the normal school budget planning cycle.</p> <p>The recommendation is being made due to a small increase in the number of schools now facing falling rolls. This can lead to staff redundancies, larger class sizes, reduced funding to spend on resources and facilities and even school closures. Financial support would be required to assist schools in any reorganisation and planning.</p> <p>The falling roles fund needs to be set on certain</p>

Item No.	Item Description	
		<p>criteria set by the EFSA and some of those are listed under page 3 under point 16.</p> <p>We had to come up with some proposed criteria based on what the ESFA set and a method of allocating some funding, on page 4, you will see a method, making it as affordable as possible as we want to support schools going through these short-term pupil number drops, often in more rural areas, to support the schools to keep them open and for community.</p> <p>A vote took place by Forum members:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Do you agree that it would be appropriate to amend Suffolk’s growth policy to include a falling rolls fund from 2023-24 following on from earlier discussions? <p>After voting 12 forum members in favour, 0 members against.</p> <p>Mike commented that once we have the information on any schools that could potentially be going through falling roles, we will report back to forum so we have the transparency about how much we will be spending on that.</p>
7.	Schools Forum Constitution and Terms of Reference	<p>Adrian Orr presented this report to Forum.</p> <p>The constitution for Suffolk Schools Forum has not been reviewed for some time and the last version is out of date. The background of the paper you have is that it takes into consideration the various amendments that the DfE have made over the past 2-3 years and hopefully puts it into a readable and straightforward format.</p> <p>A couple of points to highlight are: for Forum members to identify a formal substitute to ensure continuity. Substitutes may attend forum as an observer to gain an understanding of the work and terminology. So, if someone is not available to make it to Forum, particularly if there are complex issues where there may be differing views, having enough people at Forum becomes important and although we are quorate today, we are only just quorate.</p>

Item No.	Item Description	
		<p>Adrian will write to all Forum members to encourage the identification of a formal substitute and has written a short section of that into this document.</p> <p>There are two elements to the vote, are members happy to adopt this and also to have a three-year review period.</p> <p>We may see some DfE Forum changes in the next few years, so would be good to review this more frequently than we have done to date.</p> <p>A vote took place by Forum members:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Do you agree to adopt the proposed constitution set out in the report? <p>After voting 11 forum members in favour, 0 members against.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Do you agree to a three-year review period for the forum's constitution? <p>After voting 12 forum members in favour, 0 members against.</p>
8.	Early Years Position Statement	<p>Christina Lewis, Head of Early Years and Childcare in attendance for this item to remind forum members of the pressures that early years and childcare sector are dealing with. Suffolk is underfunded in early years compared with other LAs. Take up is really accelerating of the funded entitlements, so we have plenty of children and providers are reporting that they are incredibly busy this term and normally September is a quiet term but they are looking quite full in September as well. Plenty of children wanting to access their entitlement but at the same time we have early years provision closing. Some closing due to the financial difficulties which are outlined in the paper and an inability to recruit to maintain the level of service. This is stressful for providers and challenging for parents trying to find a place and threatens the LAs ability to meet our statutory sufficiency duty. We are also struggling to meet the increasing levels of children with special educational needs, this is because whilst providers want to provide for all children when they need additional resource to be</p>

Item No.	Item Description	
		<p>able to support a child with special educational needs, they can't recruit them.</p> <p>We wanted to make Forum aware of the significant challenges at the moment. As Mike mentioned there may be an apparent surplus in the early years block, we are hoping there will be but we won't know yet, but when we do, we would hope to pass that through in some way, in order to help get as much resource out there as much as we can. We are also working with colleges and job centre plus to try and address the recruitment issues but that will be a longer-term plan.</p> <p>Amanda Havers, Early Years Provider fully endorses what Christina has said and often advocates for more funding. Recruitment and retention issues are unprecedented and has not known this issue before to this extent.</p> <p>Ruth Coleman, Early Years sector, recruitment is the worst it has ever been, no cover for sickness, covid numbers are rising, staff are exhausted. SEND numbers are high, no staff to add additional staff in the room. Those born in the first lockdown are now in our rooms so pressure on communication and language, personal, social and emotional, not toilet trained, eating processed food. This is just to make you aware of the difficulties ongoing and this is not getting any easier.</p> <p>Colin Shaw represents Post-16 sector offered to meet with Christina and put an offer forward to see how we can work more closely together. We are starting to see an increase in the number of young people who are interested in the sector at T levels for education and early years and apprenticeships as well, hopefully working together we could address some of the problems you are seeing.</p> <p>Questions were raised by forum members.</p>
9.	Primary Headteacher Association Request	<p>Gill Mitchell in attendance for this item to put their request to Schools Forum.</p> <p>The Suffolk Primary Heads Association (SPHA) funding was originally based upon a school level subscription. The organisation was set up to represent all the primary headteachers in Suffolk. The</p>

Item No.	Item Description	
		<p>subscriptions were then stopped when funding was agreed by schools forum. Due to budget constraints and the progressive removal of the historic element in the Central Schools Service Block element of the DSG the funding was eventually stopped. SPHA have been managing without the funding for the last couple of years but are now requesting that the funding be reinstated through forum today or partially reinstated if necessary.</p> <p>The report lists many of the benefits of the Suffolk Primary Heads Association especially in the last few years with the pandemic and the key role the association played in being able to liaise with the local authority and provide heads with touchstone and networking that they need and to be able to work with new heads so there is less isolation. The request is for £30,000. The breakdown of what the funding would be used for: Executive officer (16 hours per week 4 weeks per month, and Executive Assistant and Finance officer.</p> <p>Questions were raised by Forum members.</p> <p>A vote took place by Forum members:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Do you agree to fund the running costs of Suffolk Primary Heads' Association (SPHA) - £30,000 per annum? <p>After voting 9 forum members in favour, 3 members against.</p>
10.	Schools Forum Vacancies	<p>Currently there are 3 academy vacancies on Schools Forum. Adrian Orr therefore sought views from Academy representatives present at the meeting as to whether they would like the Local Authority (LA) to run an election on behalf of Academies to seek further members or whether Academy sector would prefer to run this themselves.</p> <p>Academy Forum Members agreed for the LA to support and run the election on their behalf. Adrian Orr will therefore set in motion the appropriate election arrangements.</p>

Item No.	Item Description	
11.	AOB	If Forum members are unable to attend these meetings, please send a substitute representative in your place. Given the importance of these meetings we do need to make sure we are quorate for voting needed at these meetings.
12.	Forward Agenda	<u>October</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Central Schools Service Block • De-delegation (changes DfE have made) • Schools Block Budget 2023-24 • Reporting back on NFF consultation • High Needs Update • Early Years DSG Outturn
8.	Date of the next meeting	The next meeting is confirmed as Thursday 13 October 2022, 9.30am Microsoft Teams (and live streamed through YouTube).
		<p>AC Thank you for all of your contributions this morning, we had some good debates about the topics and a mix of views which is the reason schools forum exists is to share that thinking and come to joint solutions.</p> <p>Thank you for your time this morning, have a good summer and see you in October.</p> <p>Meeting closed at 11:05am</p>