

Minutes of the Suffolk Schools' Forum held at 9.30am on Thursday 20 October 2022 via Microsoft Teams (and live streamed through YouTube)

Present:

Non-School Members	Colin Shaw, 16-19 Provider Amanda Havers, PVI Pat Chapman, PVI Maria Kemble, RC Diocese
Academy Members	Darren Woodward, Mainstream Angelo Goduti, Mainstream Gemma Andrews, Mainstream Wendy James, Mainstream Jennifer Hunwicke, Mainstream Steven Dewing, Mainstream Angela Ransby, AP Provision
Maintained School Members	Allison Coleman, Primary (Chair) Robert Lenko, Secondary 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 Rachel Hood Adrian Orr Sonya Harban Mike Quinton Julia Grainger Julia Haig Matthew Cooke Christina Lewis Gemma Morgan Teresa Spilling Barbara Barraclough

Item No.	Item Description	
1.	Welcome – Virtual Meeting Etiquette	<p>Chair welcomed new Academy members to their first meeting, Jennifer Hunwicke and Steven Dewing.</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"> • Daniel Jones, Andrew Berry, Paul Fykin, Sue Prickett, Lizzy Murphy
3.	Minutes of the previous meeting & issues arising	<p>The minutes of the previous meeting held on 30 June 2022 were agreed as an accurate reflection of the meeting and signed off by the Chair.</p>
4.	Approval of Central Schools Services Block Budget 2023-24	<p>Sonya Harban (SH), CYP Strategic Finance Lead introduced this item.</p> <p>This paper covers the DfE guidance which requires Schools' Forum to agree the budget split which is recommended for the central schools services block (CSSB).</p> <p>Schools' Forum are required to formally vote annually to agree the continuation of funding for each service from the historical commitment element of the CSSB, subject to a 20% reduction imposed by the DfE, therefore 2023-24 will be the fourth year that savings of 20% have needed to be made. This is the first year that savings are being covered corporately by Suffolk CC so there is no disturbance to the services received by schools.</p> <p>Please note that descriptors of services are shown at Annex A.</p> <p>Questions were raised by Forum Members.</p> <p>Steven Dewing: Chief Financial Officer, Sapientia Education Trust new member of forum asked if savings could be clarified? <i>The saving is coming from the CSSB but the money is being supported by Suffolk CC core funding, so managers will not see any reduction in the total amount of money that they have to spend on their service, it's just funded from a different funding</i></p>

Item No.	Item Description	
		<p><i>stream. With regards to the CSSB it represents as a saving because we do not have to fund that element from the CSSB but it is now coming from core funding which isn't part of what we have to vote on.</i></p> <p>Karen Lodge: Education and learning appear to have a massive cut in service. How can this be managed? <i>There is a range of statutory duties which don't change although the DfE are removing funding from us. The corporate area of funding gives us a sustainable future to meet statutory functions for the year ahead.</i></p> <p>Amanda Havers: How many children in care are the Virtual School overseeing and what size is the Virtual School team? <i>Virtual School has an extended remit following the September 2021 guidance to include previously looked after children and children with a social worker. There are close to 550 children in care of statutory school age at the beginning of the school year, and numbers continue to rise through the year up to 620-630 statutory school aged children. We also have a post-16 branch and that moves to about 300-320 post-16 children in care. The team has 9 full-time officers, gained an additional post for the extension of duty for children with a social worker and also someone who has the remit for previously looked after children. We have a very well supported virtual school office which has some part-time/term-time colleagues.</i></p> <p>Vote took place by all Forum Members:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. to agree the described savings proposals of £ 0.678m? <p>After voting 16 forum members in favour, 0 members against.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. to agree the funding for the services described in Annex A delivered by the Education and Learning team of £0.194m <p>After voting 16 forum members in favour, 0 members against.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. to agree the funding for the services described

Item No.	Item Description	
		<p>in Annex A delivered by the Early Help team of £2.148m</p> <p>After voting 16 forum members in favour, 0 members against.</p> <p>4. to agree the funding for the services described in Annex A delivered by the Virtual School for Looked After Children of £0.345m</p> <p>After voting 16 forum members in favour, 0 members against.</p> <p>5. To agree the funding of any residual long-term redundancy costs of £0.023m.</p> <p>After voting 16 forum members in favour, 0 members against.</p> <p>Andrew Berry is not in attendance at the meeting today but has confirmed he has read the appropriate papers and is in support this paper.</p> <p>Due to a technical issue with the Polls for votes, members were asked to let Teresa Spilling know direct to ensure their votes were counted.</p>
5.	Early Years DSG Block 2021-22 Revised Outturn	<p>Sonya Harban (SH) introduced this item.</p> <p>Schools Forum are asked to note the final Early Years DSG outturn for 2021-22, and that £0.250m of the surplus should be re-distributed amongst Early Years providers.</p> <p>Early Years funding is based on census data from January as we don't get the final figure for the 2021-22 DSG for Early Years until July of the following year. We always get a change in the July which will then give us our overall spend for the 2021-22 block. When the data comes in at the end of March for the end of the financial year, we can then work out the difference between the income so far but what we expect the DfE to change in July. We have now had that change and that shows that there was an overall difference between the money we had in and provided to providers of £250,000.</p>

Item No.	Item Description	
		<p>Given the minimal increases which the early years sector has had and the difficult economic circumstances not just early years providers as schools are in the same position, it is appropriate to passport this funding to early years providers.</p> <p>Darren Woodward: Does this include funding to any schools that have nursery provision? <i>Yes, it is everyone who claimed early education funding will get a percentage of this.</i></p> <p>Vote took place by Forum Members:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">6. Agree that £0.250m of the surplus should be re-distributed amongst Early Years providers?</p> <p>After voting 16 forum members in favour, 0 members against.</p> <p>Andrew Berry is not in attendance at the meeting today but has confirmed he has read the appropriate papers and is in support of this paper.</p> <p>Thank you for voting on this paper this now concludes the voting. Sonya and Christina will be in touch with regards to the percentage of distribution early years providers will be receiving.</p>
6.	DSG Forecast 2022-23	<p>Sonya Harban (SH) introduced this item.</p> <p>Schools' Forum are asked to note the DSG forecast outturn for 2022-23 and the impact this will have on the DSG reserve position if both DSG funding and spending remain unchanged this financial year.</p> <p>This report is for information only. The DSG reserve position affects all schools and provider settings.</p> <p>This is an updated forecast which takes into account known and projected commitments for the year as of 30 September.</p> <p>Increase in overall overspend to 7.026m partly due to increased demand in SEND.</p> <p>Gemma Morgan will be able to go into more detail in the next item.</p>

Item No.	Item Description	
		<p>Gemma and colleagues attended the Delivering Better Values spend programme event in Milton Keynes. We are therefore making sure that the DfE are clear that the problem for Suffolk is the low level of funding received in Suffolk compared to other authorities with regards to the funding element of the historical spend. Suffolk received £287 per pupil in terms of the historical element, Norfolk received £371 per pupil, which is on a like for like basis.</p> <p>Questions were raised by Forum Members.</p> <p>Robert Lenko: What happens if there is a 7m deficit? <i>Good question. Yes at the moment the deficit is getting worse and worse which is partly why we are in the better values SEND programme. There are two programmes which the DfE have:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>1. Safety Valve: for whose deficits are a very high percentage.</i> <i>2. Better Values: for those with smaller deficits.</i> <p><i>There are conditions upon which participation in each is based and the Suffolk deficit is not of enough severity to put us in the Safety Valve group. We are working closely with advisors from DfE about the steps we should take.</i></p> <p>Jennifer Hunwicke: As we are funded less than other Authorities and is there any work going on in the background that can be negotiated to change this in the future? <i>This has been going on for many years and we have been lobbying throughout that time. We had hoped that when the national funding formula was first announced that there would be a levelling of funding and some adjustments have been made but sadly Suffolk hasn't benefitted from that so far. Lobbying work continues both at officer and councillor level.</i></p> <p>Our Cabinet Member, Cllr Rachel Hood has been very proactive in lobbying MPs and aligning that with the lobbying that the Suffolk Education Partnership has been doing as a joined-up campaign to try and shift this position.</p>
7.	High Needs Funding and	Gemma Morgan (GM), Head of SEND Funding and Provider Services in attendance for this item.

Item No.	Item Description	
	DSG Deficit Recovery Plan for Suffolk	<p>This report gives the current spending of the 2022/23 High Needs Block allocation and comparison to the last financial year.</p> <p><u>Current Deficit Position</u> 7m for this current financial year, predicted forecast. We are seeing a growth in high needs funding. Requests are coming in from all settings. You will see from the table, there is growth in years 4, 6 and 9. All this work will feed into the Delivering Better Value programme. There is a 14% increase on the places we have commissioned this year. All this information is published in the SEND sufficiency plan.</p> <p><u>DSG recovery plan</u> Gemma and Mike Quinton have been updating this spreadsheet template which is a working document. Prior to Forum there was a question regarding what our saving plans were, at the current time we do not have savings plans we have cost avoidance processes in place for example the SEND capital Programme, the third phase has just been agreed by Cabinet. This is capital investment across new provision in Suffolk, to ensure that children stay within the local offer.</p> <p>Previously Forum have agreed to 0.5% contribution from the schools' block to help support some of the deficit recovery which will come to Forum in November for voting to be part of reserves this year as opposed to looking for the funding for next year.</p> <p><u>Additional high needs funding</u> At the last meeting Forum were asked to vote on how we spent some of the additional funding received from DfE. At the time it was agreed that the £97 per place to be paid to our PRUs and Special Schools which took place shortly after the meeting. The high needs working group met on 8th September, two members of Schools' Forum were invited to attend Darren Woodward and Andrew Berry, in order to have sight in more detail about how the money is being spent. Details of the additional funding is included in the paper along with the rise in requests for bands. You will see more requests for children in special schools are being received for Band H and I.</p> <p>Questions were raised by Forum members.</p>

Item No.	Item Description	
		<p>Robert Lenko: Who decides on this banding and how does the process work? <i>On a termly basis, we ask all our mainstream and special schools to submit a spreadsheet which outlines all the children who are in their provision and what band they are on and put in a request for any increases/decreases or new requests along with supporting evidence which demonstrates what provision is being put in place for those children, the cost of the provision and the needs of the children. That then goes to a panel of SENCOs, SENCOs that are currently working in schools and members of our specialist education service who meet on a termly basis and they moderate every request. This then goes through a quality assured process and the results are shared with the schools. A robust but fair system.</i></p> <p>Steven Dewing: A decrease in band has to be initiated by the school? <i>The school has the closest relationship with the children, but it could come through an annual review (EHCP) then that would be discussed as part of the review and if it comes through that process then the school would still initiate it but it would be a discussion with a case worker from the Inclusion Service. Joy Settle, High Needs Funding Lead, goes into a variety of schools and does audits on what they are spending their high needs funding on.</i></p> <p>Karen Lodge: How much impact has Covid had on the additional requests for HNB funding? Does this affect a specific age group? <i>Once Covid hit we added a process to the moderation so that we asked schools that if the needs had changed due to Covid that we would apply a temporary band and that we would review on a termly basis. I haven't got the information to hand but I can get it as Joy Settle has a record of this information and within that she will have captured the age ranges as well. GM to include this data in her next report.</i></p> <p>Christina Lewis commented that Early Years has seen an increase in claims since the pandemic.</p> <p>Delivering Better Value Programme We are 1 of 55 local authorities in the first tranche of</p>

Item No.	Item Description	
		<p>the Delivering Better Value programme. There are three tranches, we are just starting phase 1 of the tranche where we are looking at the data and the finance. What money is being spent on, how many children we are working with and pupil level data that we have shared with the consultants. Eight local authorities met with Newton, the consultants last week in Milton Keynes to start looking at how we identify problems and how we work to solve them. All LAs have different concerns considering we are all in deficit positions its for a variety of different reasons. However, we were all very clear about the level of funding. Newton is working with LAs to try and find a solution to explore all options. First phase of data and finance is happening now. In November the second phase around operational side of things, and the third phase is how it could be implemented. Then there is an opportunity to apply for a grant of up to £1m to support us in the implementation planning stage.</p> <p><u>ACTION:</u> <i>GM to include a paragraph to reflect this data in her next report to share with Forum.</i></p>
8.	Cost of Living	<p>Allison Coleman asked Forum for their views on this item and offered to write to the Secretary of State on behalf of Schools' Forum to express our concerns about all the different cost of living pressures.</p> <p>Karen Lodge: I represent pupil referral units and there are a number of concerns. One of the biggest things is our unknown costs. Teacher pay rises, support staff pay rises; because those are all big unknowns. Another issue is increased complexity of needs and it isn't around the high tariff funding necessarily, but it's the extremities of needs partly driven by COVID but not exclusively and trying to make sure that we have a range of very creative approaches to address those needs, which of course all cost.</p> <p>Wendy James: A huge uncertainty for us as a school is something that we've lived with for probably the last eight years, my year two and three budgets have been a work of fiction until the next thing comes through. I think the local authority probably in that position as well. My biggest concern at the moment is the lack of control people feel and the uncertainty for families and every time you watch the news. We've</p>

Item No.	Item Description	
		<p>obviously got some high levels of need and we try and support those families. Mental health issues have been really exacerbated.</p> <p>Colin Shaw: I'm representing the post 16 sector, specifically, further education. I appreciate that all educational settings are struggling at the moment. Our funding pay rises for staff are not funded centrally by government. We have to find those savings ourselves to be able to pay rises for staff.</p> <p>Linking into the previous discussions that we've had the biggest impact we've seen at the moment are the business support and student support staff who are leaving. We had five learning support assistants resign. Everybody is seeing these challenging situations and making some very tough, difficult decisions.</p> <p>Pat Chapman: Early years are very used to struggles and a lot of our problems are very similar to all you know here and what other people have said. Food is a big issue for us, young children need a good balanced diet and we don't have the funds to provide the meals we would like to.</p> <p>Steven Dewing: I echo everything, every everyone said and I think sending a letter is a very good idea. The NJC pay scale and pay rise causes a problem as it takes so long to be agreed and causes us to lose staff, cleaners, caterers, TAs to other sectors. So, I think flagging that up is important as well.</p> <p>Jennifer Hunwicke: I echo colleagues views on the challenges with recruitment and retention and salary cost. The other thing we are seeing is the impact of the contracts that we have increasing uncertainty in terms of cleaning, catering, where we've outsourced this because obviously their costs are increasing.</p> <p>Maria Kemble: I agree with everything everyone said. For the very first time in my entire just over 20 years as the headteacher, I've asked parents for a contribution so that we can fund our arts and DT curriculum because of the cost of materials and we haven't got the funding to do that. Catering in house, we took the decision that we would review the menus so we would still meet the nutritional standards, but we are now offering minimal choice. Stress levels that</p>

Item No.	Item Description	
		<p>we have all lived under for the last 2.5 years and that continued feeling of stress and what that is actually doing. Number of safeguarding concerns that we are putting in on a daily basis, whether in early help or more serious, related to financial pressures on families.</p> <p>The Chair summarised feedback received from the headteacher at the Ashley School around the increases in core funding levels, 0.5% uplift insufficient, salary increases and risk of losing staff, no cost cutting areas left and the potential prospect of insolvency arising in the academies annual audit cycle.</p> <p>Thank you to colleagues for their valuable contributions. Comments have been insightful and not particularly surprising in the current climate. These concerns detract from core school business which is about educating children and fulfilling their potential.</p> <p>Should you have any additional comments to make please email Allison, Adrian and Sonya in order that information can be included in the letter being sent to the Secretary of State on behalf of Schools' Forum.</p>
9.	AOB	None.
10.	Forward Agenda	<p><u>November</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • De-delegation (voting required by maintained schools) • Authority Proforma Tool (APT) • Schools Block re: DSG deficit (voting required) • National Funding Formula Update
11.	Date of the next meeting	The next meeting is confirmed as Tuesday 22 November, 9.30am Microsoft Teams (and live streamed through YouTube).
		Meeting closed at 11am.