

Minutes of the Suffolk Schools' Forum held at 1.30pm on Thursday 18 January 2024 via Microsoft Teams (and live streamed through YouTube)

Present:

Non-School Members	Kate Sida-Nicholls, 16-19 Provider (<i>on behalf of Colin Shaw</i>) Amanda Havers, PVI (<i>Sub: Sophie Conway</i>) Emma White, PVI (<i>Sub: Sophie Conway</i>) Anne-Marie Price, RC Diocese (<i>on behalf of Maria Kemble</i>)
Academy Members	Andrew Berry, Mainstream Darren Woodward, Mainstream Gordon Jones, Mainstream Angelo Goduti, Mainstream Wendy James Mainstream Steven Dewing, Mainstream Sue Prickett, Special Angela Ransby, AP Provision
Maintained School Members	Allison Coleman, Primary (Chair) Robert Lenko, Secondary Linda Walker, Secondary (<i>on behalf of Rowena Mackie/John Tunaley</i>) Ruth Coleman, Nursery

Observers and Local Authority

Observers	There were observers present at the meeting
Local Authority	Sonya Harban Mike Quinton Ros Somerville Gemma Morgan Christina Lewis Julia Grainger Teresa Spilling Jacqueline Dyer

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1.	Welcome – Virtual Meeting Etiquette	The Chair welcomed members to this meeting. This meeting is a public meeting being live streamed via YouTube.
2.	Apologies for	Apologies for absence were received from:

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	absence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rachel Hood, Chris Chambers, El Mayhew, Matthew Ferrier, Andrew Robinson, Daniel Jones, Paul Fykin, Adrian Orr. • Rowena Mackie and John Tunaley (<i>therefore Linda Walker in attendance on their behalf</i>)
3.	Term of Office (Chair and Vice-Chair)	<p>Sonya Harban introduced this item in Adrian Orr's absence.</p> <p>Following a decision by Forum members in January 2022 it was agreed to have a 2 year term of office for the Chair and Vice-Chair of these meetings.</p> <p>Prior to this meeting an email was circulated to Forum Members to seek nominations for the Chair or Vice-Chair role. Following responses received from Members no other nominations were received, however, emails stated that they are more than happy to support Allison and Robert to continue in these roles.</p> <p>The current Chair, Allison Coleman and Vice Chair, Robert Lenko confirmed they would be happy to stand again if no other nominations were received.</p> <p>A vote took place by Forum Members:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Do Forum agree for the current Chair, Allison Coleman to continue in this role for a further 2 years term of office? <p>After voting 14 forum members in favour, 0 members against.</p> <p>We are therefore pleased to confirm that Allison Coleman has been re-elected as Chair of Schools' Forum for the next 2 years.</p> <p>Allison Coleman took over the meeting at this point as the re-elected Chair.</p> <p>A vote took place by Forum Members for the Vice-Chair of Forum:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Do Forum agree for the current Vice-Chair, Robert Lenko to continue in this role for a further 2 years term of office? <p>After voting 14 forum members in favour, 0</p>

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		<p>members against.</p> <p>We are pleased to record that Robert Lenko has been re-elected as Vice-Chair for the next two years of Schools' Forum.</p>
4.	Minutes of the previous meeting & issues arising	<p>The minutes of the previous meeting held on 30 November 2023 were agreed as an accurate reflection of the meeting and signed off by the Chair.</p> <p>Page 6: Item 6: SEND Provision Update.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GM sent RL data required. • GM to bring paper to next meeting with regards to the Autumn data as data analysis is still taking place.
5.	Early Years national funding formula (EYNFF) 2024-25	<p>Christina Lewis (CL), Head of Service for Early Years and Childcare introduced this report.</p> <p>The EYNFF rates must be set and implemented in April 2024. If the rates are agreed at this meeting this information will be published this afternoon to make the sector aware.</p> <p>Consulted with the providers' consultative forum, three members are present today. The model being recommended ensures that early years providers receive the maximum available in the hourly rate and that SCC retains enough to meet their statutory duties. New entitlements will be implemented during the course of this year:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a new entitlement for 2 year old children of working parents from April • the implementation of a funded offer for 9 months plus children of working parents from September 2024. The rate for this is also included in this proposal. <p>Question raised by Forum Members:</p> <p>Robert Lenko (RL): Could you explain when it says in item 5 you can expand the offer to providers, but this results in less being passed through to providers? What do you mean by more supplements?</p> <p><i>CL: historically in the last few years we've retained 3.3%. Any local authority is allowed to retain up to 5%, which pays for our services that provide support</i></p>

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		<p><i>and delivery mechanisms for the providers, so they do benefit from it, but they don't get directly the money if we retained more, so we're proposing to retain 3% from this year onwards. But if we retained more, if we retain stay the 5% then that would mean I could expand my team and we could offer more to the providers. The preference at the moment has been because Suffolk is low funded to not do that and to pass as much as we can through retaining just enough to meet our statutory duties.</i></p> <p><i>We have to have a deprivation supplement and an inclusion fund that comes from the funded hours, but we could also have supplements for quality, for rurality, but the consultative forum feel that that would water down the base rate too much and so prefer that we only have the two supplements and keep at a minimum amount so to maximise the hourly rate and everybody benefits from that.</i></p> <p>Wendy James: Looking at the SEND rate and wondered where that figure comes from .3% .4%. Is it going to enable settings to meet the needs of their SEND children?</p> <p><i>CL: that is a small amount that is retained for an inclusion fund. An inclusion fund is only for emerging needs. If a setting has a child who's got an established need, they can apply for high needs funding as well and they also can apply for the Disability Access Fund on top as well. The inclusion fund is usually underspent and I end up distributing it later in the year because it's only for children for a maximum of two terms, whilst the provider is assessing what the child's needs are. However, if the needs are still there after two terms, then it's right that they move onto high needs funding because we've established there is a more significant need.</i></p> <p>Chair thanked Christina and commented on the good relationship with the consultative group working together with the sector to work out what the best option is given how low the funding is in Suffolk.</p> <p>A vote took place by Forum Members:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Do you agree to the funding rates for the early education entitlements (existing and expansion) for 2024-25?

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		<p>After voting 15 forum members in favour, 0 members against.</p> <p>Christina Lewis will publish this information today in order that providers can start their planning.</p>
6.	Schools Block Funding Submission: 2024-25	<p>This paper was introduced by Mike Quinton (MQ), Senior Accountant, SCC CYP.</p> <p>This paper is in addition to the paper presented on 30 November as all updates for DSG funding 2024-25 have been received.</p> <p>A couple of tables have been added to summarise the position for next year and the changes seen on those allocations.</p> <p>Point 7 relates to changes in pupil numbers in Suffolk. Table in page 2 shows an overall reduction of 1.7m in the funding in Suffolk.</p> <p>There have been no further changes or updates since the 30 November meeting to all schools' block factor updates.</p> <p>Annex A includes draft APT which will be submitted to the ESFA next week. Awaiting information from boroughs and districts so may be some slight changes.</p> <p>In Suffolk we aim to get Toolkits out before the February half term, 16 February. Academies and reps on Forum can go onto Suffolk Learning to see the final budget allocations. The budget commentary sets out all the detail.</p> <p>Growth and Falling Rolls fund keeping the same as 2023-24 levels. MQ to report back in Summer with the DSG Outturn and what growth and falling rolls fund looks like this year.</p> <p>Likely to have slight underspend on the growth funding because there have been some delays with new school projects and some of the builds and falling rolls.</p> <p>Questions raised by Forum members:</p>

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		<p>Gordon Jones (GJ): A general query on the pupil numbers re the forecasts for primary schools in the years 2024-25 and 2025-26, are they continuing to decline as they are perhaps nationally?</p> <p><i>MQ: without having the information to hand and this is something that can be shared and it can be an action. I think the numbers in primary are falling and although that goes against some of the growth we are seeing in some areas in the county, more about housing and redistribution of people from around the county. What we're finding is rural schools are losing pupils, but in Ipswich, Lowestoft, the bigger urban centres there is a need for increasing places. Overall, at the primary level, there is a trend for those numbers to reduce over the coming years. MQ to gather some information and share with forum members. The infrastructure team work on people projections around spring into early summer and I want to try and get data out before the strategic planning, so schools have that in place, as we know it's difficult for schools to plan with the uncertainty around the funding and the low levels we get in Suffolk.</i></p> <p>Chair thanked Mike and his team for all the work which goes into getting the school packs ready and out by 16 February.</p> <p><u>ACTION:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>MQ to send out information to Forum Members</i>
7.	SEND Provision Update (standing item)	<p>This item was introduced by Gemma Morgan (GM), Head of SEND Funding and Provider Services to give Forum an overview.</p> <p>At the next meeting GM will talk about the Autumn term moderation, as data still being analysed. There were 1600 requests for band changes within our mainstream settings. All payments were sent out by the end of the calendar year. Once the data has been analysed GM will share this with Forum at the next meeting along with data for the Spring term moderation.</p> <p>Following on from the last meeting, mitigation work has started with the High Needs Working Group. Discussion around EHCPs and the information within</p>

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		<p>an EHCP. More work to be undertaken with other colleagues in the inclusion service and Ros Somerville on how we are developing moving forward. Conversations to continue with the High Needs Working Group and will feedback to a future meeting.</p> <p>Delivering Better Value Programme and Deficit Management Plan annex, which has been updated since issuing this document. Working with CIPFA accounting organisation who are supporting us with our predictions and the plan is reflective of the position moving forward. Meeting with CIPFA next week which will feed into the DfE. Other Local Authorities (LAs) in the country are also receiving financial support from DfE through delivering better value or the safety value programme. We will share updates with Forum at each meeting.</p> <p>We continue to have a large deficit within the HNB budget as we approach the end of the financial year. There has been an increase in spend on independent and bespoke provision. However, we are still predicting £25-26m overspend by the end of this financial year, bringing overall deficit to £50m as a cumulative figure.</p> <p>Questions raised by Forum Members:</p> <p>Robert Lenko: Thanks Gemma and asked if that team is fully staffed. <i>GM: No not across the whole Inclusion service, we have vacancies within family services and provider services team as well.</i></p> <p>Gordon Jones: Commented I don't underestimate the challenge that you and your colleagues have. Raised concerns of the position that Suffolk are in and other LAs find themselves in also. <i>GM: We have shared similar feedback with the DfE regarding the deficit management plan because it's not a recovery plan.</i></p> <p>Please see link to High Needs Funding – Suffolk Learning for your information.</p> <p>Wendy James: This funding is very important and just to say that all of us trying to provide that provision but are really struggling to do that with the</p>

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		<p>funding.</p> <p>Thanks to Gemma, Ros and the team for all the work they do. The issue comes from our funding is not there to support the demand in Suffolk.</p> <p>Chair commented that she's been a governor since 1999 and the increase in the number of pupils needing additional support has just increased exponentially during that time. It's all about the needs of the children and the fact that the funding hasn't kept pace with it.</p>
8.	AOB	None.
9.	Forward Agenda	<p>Future meeting dates and key agenda items are listed on the forward plan.</p> <p>Should you have any items you would like to add to the agenda please let us know.</p>
10.	Date of the next meeting	<p>The next meeting is confirmed as Thursday 9 May 2024, 9.30am Microsoft Teams (and live streamed through YouTube).</p>
		Meeting closed at 10.12am.