

Minutes of the Suffolk Schools' Forum held at 9.30am on Thursday 3 October 2024 via Microsoft Teams (and live streamed through YouTube)

Present:

Non-School Members	Colin Shaw, 16-19 Provider Sophie Conway, PVI (<i>on behalf of Amanda Havers</i>) Emma White, PVI Maria Kemble, RC Diocese
Academy Members	Andrew Berry, Mainstream Daniel Jones, Mainstream Darren Woodward, Mainstream Gordon Jones, Mainstream Angelo Goduti, Mainstream Paul Fykin, Mainstream Steven Dewing, Mainstream Sue Prickett, Special Angela Ransby, AP Provision
Maintained School Members	Allison Coleman, Primary (Chair) Robert Lenko, Secondary Rowena Mackie, Secondary Ruth Coleman, Nursery

Observers and Local Authority

Observers	There were observers present at the meeting
Local Authority	Cllr Andrew Reid Cllr Debbie Richards Julia Grainger Julia Haig Mike Quinton Ros Somerville Gemma Morgan Teresa Spilling Jacqueline Dyer

Item No.	Item Description	
1.	Welcome – Virtual Meeting Etiquette	The Chair welcomed members to this meeting. This meeting is a public meeting being live streamed via YouTube.

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2.	Apologies for absence	<p>Apologies for absence were received from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sarah-Jane Smedmor, Andrew Robinson, Kate Sida-Nicholls, Karen Pringle, Christina Lewis, • Amanda Havers (Substitute: Sophie Conway in attendance on behalf of)
3.	Minutes of the previous meeting & issues arising	<p>Page 1: Gordon Jones apologies noted but remove his name from attendance list, page 1 on minutes of the last meeting.</p> <p>Page 2: Update on Pupil Projections – Paper on Growth and Falling Rolls with all Pupil Projections in November.</p> <p>Page 4: Safety value – amendment needed – RS to send revised wording to TS for amending on last minutes.</p> <p>Page 5 – An analysis of other LA deficits and transfers to HNB will form part of the budget paper in November.</p> <p>The minutes of the previous meeting held on 4 July 2024 were agreed as an accurate reflection of the meeting and signed off by the Chair.</p>
4.	Approval of Central School Services Block Budget 2025-26	<p>Mike Quinton, Senior Accountant, CYP presented this paper on the Approval on the Central School Services Block Budget 2025-26. Julia Haig, Head of Service - Family Support also in attendance for this item.</p> <p>Forum are being asked to agree the revised reduced budgets in relation to the historic commitments element of CSSB. Forum are being asked to vote annually to agree the continuation of funding for each service for the historic elements of the CSSB each year. The DfE are reducing the historic elements of the CSSB by 20% each year and this is the 6th year of reductions. The revised CSSB budgets proposed do not lead to any reduction in services that schools would currently receive, as these reductions are met by savings found by SCC core funding.</p> <p>The CSSB was introduced in 2018-19 which included the old ESG grant which covered the statutory duties and included the contribution to combined budget element, consisting of historic grants, historic commitments and those historic commitments were based on decisions made by Schools Forum pre-2013, before the first national funding formula. The reason the DfE wanted 20% reductions was because each LA had very differing amounts of funding for certain central services. The current guidance shows that the 20% reduction will continue year on year.</p>

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		<p><u>Questions raised by Forum Members:</u></p> <p>Robert Lenko: Family Support Services, very good value for money, but in future will any more money be put towards that?</p> <p><i>MQ: This refers to the historic elements which will reduce, so any additional funding will need to be funded by core funding.</i></p> <p><i>JH: Thank you for your observations with regards to the service. As Mike mentioned the funding for the service is made-up of two/three elements. We also have resource for the service through a different grant, a programme called supporting families that we have nationally. It is a very low referral rate. What we are looking for going forward is to improve the way we work with our schools based colleagues, our educational colleagues to try and provide a greater level of support within that area, but I take your comment and fully advocate your comment around the importance of providing early intervention and prevention services and support for families to reduce the need for statutory based intervention.</i></p> <p>Chair thanked Julia Haig for the helpful context.</p> <p>A vote took place on the elements of the CSSB Budget by Forum members:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To agree the CSSB funding for the services described in Annex A delivered by the Family Support team of £1.714 million? <p>After voting 14 forum members in favour, 0 members against.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. To agree the funding of any residual long-term redundancy costs of £0.021 million? <p>After voting 15 forum members in favour, 0 members against.</p>
5.	Early Years Outturn 2023-24	<p>Mike Quinton gave a verbal update on this item as Christina Lewis is unwell. A detailed paper will come to the November meeting.</p> <p>The year end process for Early Years is based on the actual uptake and our early years grant funding is always based on estimated numbers. In July we had that recoupment from the DfE. Our estimate for this year, with data and good work from the early years team, means we are virtually spot on with what we thought our underspend was. Underspend last year on the early years block was</p>

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		<p>about £600,000, due to lower take up on three and four year olds and that was recouped from the DfE.</p> <p>We do have some reserve money within the early years section of the DSG, which means there could be some good news for providers. Christina will bring a detailed paper in November.</p>
6.	SEND Provision Update	<p>Gemma Morgan, Head of SEND Funding and Provider Services in attendance for this item.</p> <p>This is an information paper no decision needed at this meeting. First part of the paper is to inform Forum that we have had to increase the deficit on the high needs block part of the DSG. This is due to an increase in children and young people with bespoke packages (<i>a child waiting for a specialist placement or need alternative intervention to support them with their future education and development</i>).</p> <p>There has been a huge increase in the number of children in this financial year (1 April) from 364 to 721 along with the cost of placements. Approximately £2,000 per place, amounting to nearly £1.5m for that number of children. Bespoke packages do not start at the beginning of an academic year, provision can be accessed throughout the year.</p> <p>There has also been an increase in temporary small groups. Provision has been arranged with existing providers who have space in their current classrooms (e.g. Langer Primary, Felixstowe / West Row, Bury St Edmunds / Pipers Vale, Ipswich and Bramford Lane, Ipswich) at a cost of £750,000.</p> <p>A table has been included in the report to show how much funding Suffolk receive from DfE, this includes the budget before the Academy payments are taken off, showing the increase and spend year on year.</p> <p>This paper also includes top up funding from Summer 2024 giving a comparison on how it has increased over previous years. Trajectory work being undertaken looking at trends for EHCPs, what primary needs, placements and provision we have and what is needed.</p> <p>Ros Somerville commented that Suffolk are not required to provide element 3 top up funding for those without an EHCP, it is something Suffolk chooses to do. Suffolk does not get many opportunities to meet with others involved in delivering better value. However, we can explore that with</p>

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		<p>them and others as those who do this might not be in DBV.</p> <p><u>Questions raised by Forum Members:</u> Gordon Jones raised he fully understands the demands, those with behaviours of distress in the school environment and the teaching staff. Since the last meeting there has been a change of government, Suffolk is a poorly funded county, on historical basis rather than current need, therefore is our approach to F40 or Government going to change in the coming months/years to address that? Cllr Andrew Reid commented he is a member of the F40 group and wrote to the new Secretary of State for Education some weeks ago to lobby our case for better funding in Suffolk, this was copied to all Suffolk MPs urging them to engage with Government.</p> <p>Darren Woodward: How much the 0.5% slice equates to and therefore how much of the total deficit that is impacting on? <i>MQ: This is a really valid point that we have a £100m deficit at the end of the year and we are asking schools to transfer £2.7m to support this, which seems a small amount to support such a large deficit, but it is part of the DBV stipulation that if we are in that programme then schools should be supporting that deficit recovery, regardless of how large the deficit is.</i></p>
7.	AOB	None.
8.	Forward Agenda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approval of De-Delegated Budgets 2025-26 • Schools Block Funding Submission – due to change of government we have not had the draft allocations/draft authority proforma tool, therefore this may be a verbal update • DSG Spend Financial Update – analysis statistical and regional neighbours around deficits/transfer around schools block/high needs block • Early Years Update / Outturn (Christina Lewis) • Update on Suffolk Pupil Projections - Growth and Falling Rolls (Pete Mumford) • SEND Provision Update
9.	Date of the next meeting	The next meeting is confirmed as Thursday 21 November 2024, 9.30am Microsoft Teams (and live streamed through YouTube).
		Meeting closed at 10.10am