**Norfolk Schools Forum**

**Minutes of Meeting held on Wednesday 19 January 2022**

**09:00 – 11:35 hours**

**Teams Meeting**

**Present: Representing**

Adrian Ball, Diocese of Ely Multi Academy Academies

Trust

Keith Bates, Eaton Hall Specialist Academy Special School Academy

Chris Caddamy, (Vice Chair) City College 16 – 19 Representative

Lacey Douglass Early Years Representative

Mike Grimble, Avenue Junior School Primary Maintained Governors

Glyn Hambling, Unity Education Trust Alternative Provision

David Hicks Academies

Howard Nelson, Diocese of Norwich Diocesan Board of Education

Carol Jacques Maintained Nursery School

Clare Jones, Boudica Schools Trust Academies

Adrian Lincoln National Education Union

Peter Pazitka, SJB CMAT Academies

Joanne Philpott, City of Norwich School Academies

Sarah Porter, The Heart Education Trust Academies

David Shaw, Creative Education Trust Academies

Sarah Shirras, St Williams Primary Primary Maintained Schools

Joanna Tuttle, Aylsham High School Secondary Maintained Schools

Martin White, (Chair) Nebula Federation Primary Maintained Governors

Rebecca Wicks, The Clare School Maintained Special Schools

Vicky Warnes National Education Union

Michael Bateman Assistant Director, SEND Strategic Improvement & Early Effectiveness

Martin Brock Accountant, Schools, SEN, and Early Years

John Crowley Assistant Director Learning & Achievement

Marilyn Edgeley Admin Officer

Dawn Filtness Finance Business Partner

Nicki Rider Head of High Needs SEND

Chris Snudden Director of Learning & Inclusion

**Apologies:**

Sally Cutting Senior Accountant

Bob Groome National Education Union

Sara Tough Executive Director Childrens Services

1. **Welcome and Apologies**

Officers said that they hoped that a face to face meeting could take place in May.

Welcome to new Academy representative David Hicks.

Apologies were received from Sally Cutting and Bob Groome – Adrian Lincoln attended.

1. **Election of Chair and Vice Chair of Schools Forum**

Chris Snudden chaired the meeting for this item and asked Forum members for nominations for Chair of Schools Forum. Martin White said he was happy to continue as the Chair; Martin was seconded by Mike Grimble. There being no other nominations Martin White was duly elected. Chris Caddamy said he was happy to continue as Vice Chair, seconded by Mike Grimble and there being no other nominations he was duly elected.

1. **Minutes of the Last Meeting and Matters Arising**

It was agreed the minutes were a true record of the meeting.

* Joint letter to the government with other School Forums in the Eastern Region on insufficient funding for the High Needs Block.

The reply to this letter from the Secretary of State was circulated with the meeting papers.

* Independent Schools External Evaluation - a link to research on Assisted Boarding Partnership was circulated with the meeting papers
* Finance Training for School Forum members – Sally Cutting has contacted Kirsty Savage with an aim to set training up for June 2022.
1. **Review School Forum Membership**

Officers review this annually in January. Membership must equate to at least two-thirds school members and no more than one-third non-school members. Officers have checked the census data and no changes to membership are required. There is a long-standing vacancy for a Roman Catholic representative, but Officers continue to seek an appointee.

1. **Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG)**

No decision on the disapplication request to the Secretary of State made by the LA has yet been received.

**Key events or changes since November 2021 Forum – as paper**

Overall DSG is £729m compared to £699m on latest update for 2021/22.

In addition, nationally, there is an extra £1.6bn of which £2.6bn will go out to schools as a supplementary grant and £325m will go to LAs additional High Needs allocation.

**School Forum noted the information provided for the 2022/23 Dedicated Schools Block allocations and other DfE grants.**

**High Needs Block**

It was highlighted that officers are investigating if the Authority should have received more funding due to an ongoing issue with the LA’s January 2021 AP Census submission.

**Maintained Special Schools Alternative Top-up Funding Model**

Officers are proposing to move to the alternative top-up funding model previously provided to Schools Forum in November 2021 along with the outcome of the consultation with schools. The estimated cost of this including protecting schools with the minimum funding guarantee is £1.328m.

**Comments:**

* Regarding further banding review / discussions what is the time line for this to occur?

Reply - In terms of setting a budget, we have until the end of this month for Cabinet to agree it, the Cabinet paper will be published at the end of this week with their decision on the 31/1/21

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* I didn't think the revised model arising from the special schools' funding review was necessarily being adopted.

Reply – decision about the funding model is an LA (Cabinet) decision. However, we seek to advise Cabinet and recommend based on engagement with yourselves. At the last Forum meeting we asked for comments and feedback. Presuming this is supported by Forum, we will recommend that the funding model is adopted as it is an improvement on the current one.

* We had a consultation in November that raised key issues – important we are able to see any responses or actions taken.

Reply – Focus has been on getting to this point. We would look to come back in March with a timeline and proposal on how we keep this process under on-going review.

* We want to continue to encourage people to engage with consultations and have had comments in the past that people have responded and not heard back for some time.

Reply – we do understand

**School Forum is asked to consider and make recommendations to Cabinet as to the funding model used for Maintained Special Schools and academies, including an additional allocation for the Health and Social Care Levy.**

**Forum recommendations:**

* A consultation comment was that this is a cost based funding model – other schools don’t get this. Other main criticism was cost of this and where we are with the HN deficit. With the extra funding coming on board it looks as if this is a step in the right direction.
* Will recommendation include protection for schools losing out with the new formula?

Reply – Yes

The Chair asked if any member was not in favour with this recommendation? As there was no response, it was presumed all members were in favour of the above action.

Officers confirmed that the paper going to Cabinet would contain views from the consultation and the paper will refer to previous School Forum minutes.

The Chair asked that Special Schools are kept in the loop on any developments.

Officers said it would be good if Association Representatives could report back and communications could also go out through Kim Breen.

**Action: Officers agreed to provide some wording for Keith Bates to share at Special School meetings.**

**Dedicated Schools Grant Management Plan**

This is the Spring update to the DSG Management Plan. The last update was November 2021 and projected a deficit of £129.680m by the end of the 2025/26 financial year.

Based upon the latest information and modelling, the forecast in-year deficit for 2022/23 has now increased from previously forecast £13.100m to £17.924m, and the cumulative DSG deficit by 2025/26 has now increased from a forecast of £129.680m to £154.706m.

The paper shows the reasons for the increase in detail. Officers said they were refining the way they do modelling to give more accurate forecasts.

Comments:

* Independent Special School Places are down in number - is this an aberration or a downward trend?

Reply - Officer said it was probably an aberration as the trend for the previous years has been an increase. Could be a result of Covid, we are still experiencing demand outstripping supply.

**Please note** that following this meeting, the published place number table within the DSG Management Plan has been reviewed and an error has been discovered.  This error had occurred whilst splitting out independent, additional/other provisions, and medical needs/hospital provision in the table for the first time.  Some places had been accidently omitted. None of the other tables, including the forecast expenditure and deficits, were affected by this error.  The corrected table has been provided to Forum Members via email.

* Independent Places price increases - Officers said that they have included a 2% increase across all places going forward.
* Officers said it should be noted that some Independent Places have exploited price increases where as others have held their prices down and do a good job for youngsters without charging exorbitant fees. The Authority has asked the DfE to work with them on this but this has not been taken up. Officers said they still need to keep the pressure up and hope to interest regional colleagues to work with them on a regional framework.

**Action: Schools Forum Members suggested that they work with other regional Authorities at putting a letter together and lobbying the DfE on price increases.**

**Schools Forum noted the latest updates to Norfolk’s DSG Management Plan.**

**Schools Block**

There is a significant increase in funding for the Schools Block the reasons for this are given in the papers.

The authority awaits a decision on their disapplication request.

If this is agreed the total allocation will be £560m; if it is refused it will be £565m.

Officers said they expect to hear from the DfE details on the School Supplement Grant in Spring 2022.

**Schools Forum noted the funding announcements in relation to the Schools Block.**

**Early Years Block**

Changes to funding for the Early Years Block are explained in the paper .

The Nursery School Representative asked if nursery schools would see any benefit from the 9p increase to the Maintained Nursery School Grant.

Reply – We have been on a trajectory of protection being tapered because the Early Years Block does not receive funding to provide protection and so provision of the protection results in a reduction in overall hourly rates for 3 &4-year-olds. If Forum wish to they could recommend a different approach so that Nursery Schools receive a higher level of protection, but the impact of this would be a reduction in hourly rates for all 3 & 4-year-old funding. This is an LA recommendation is based upon previous Forum discussions, i.e. we are proposing to continue down this same line but understand the concerns raised. The protection is from the Early Years Block so any protection results in a loss of funding for the rest of the sector and the hourly rate - it's a very difficult balance.

The Nursery Representative said it was worth noting increased costs of teachers and LA staff would lead to a reduction in the Maintained Nursery School Grant in real terms.

Officers highlighted that nursery schools will receive allocation of £24 per pupil from the Supplementary Schools Grant in the Spring term.

The Nursery Representative said it was worth noting that nursery schools are treated as schools by the DfE and Ofsted and our framework is the same. We are not the same as the private sector.

**Schools Forum were asked to note the Maintained Nursery Supplement provide by the DSG and comment on the proposal to continue to provide additional protection (£81,160 for 2022/23) from the EY Block.**

**Schools Forum noted the information provided.**

**Early Years Pass-Through/Central Services**

The Authority is expected to pass through a minimum of 95% of funding, i.e. the LA can utilise up to 5% for central services, which equates to £1.8m. This is lower than current year as the overall EY Block of the DSG has reduced.

There is an alternative for 2-year-old funding to make a contribution.

Comments:

* Members said if a review of central services and any required streamlining had happened whilst still maintaining a service this would give people a better insight – that would be our expectation if we were presenting a finance decision.
* Sustainability – would not want to see a reduction in services if the reduction in DSG is temporary.

**Schools Forum is asked to:**

* **Vote on retention of 5% of 3- and 4-year-old allocations for EY central services**

**For 16**

**Against 0**

* **Recommend a preferred option in relation to 2-year-old contribution for EY central services**

**Option 1 15**

**Option 2 0**

**Option 3 1**

**Schools Forum is asked to:**

* **Consider and make recommendations to Cabinet for the allocation of increased hourly rates for Early Years funding in 2022/23**

**Comments:**

* Significant decrease from 17p to 10p – was there not a surplus last year?
* If the DSG goes up can we increase the rate.

Reply – If it looks as if our model needs tweaking we would do this.

We over allocated last year and this is an attempt to rectify this.

**Action: Communicate with providers how the increase rate was reached.**

**School Forum were in favour of the recommendation to increase the hourly rates.**

**Central Services School Block**

Increase of £193,000 partly due to pupil numbers and part in increase in amount allocated.

**Schools Forum noted the funding announcements in relation to the Central Services Schools Block**

**Action: Members requested a report from the Authority on the way in which teams are put together in relation to their responsibilities to schools.**

1. **Pupil Variation**

Each year we present the variations to Schools Forum to show the budgets affected. This year the paper has two options this is because we are still awaiting a decision on our disapplication request from the government.

**This paper is for information only.**

1. **Possible School Closure/APT Adjustment**

**Schools Forum are asked to make a recommendation from options that the LA could implement, including, if necessary (for option 2) Forum approval (all members) for an increase to the 2022/23 Growth Fund.**

**Votes:**

**Option 1 0**

**Option 2 0**

**Option 3 14**

1. **Monitoring and Improvement Grant Reduction update**

The LA will come back to Schools Forum in the future with proposals as to changes that will need to be made to mitigate the removal of the grant and, if appropriate, there may be future requests for contributions for services through de-delegation / buy-back for future years.

**Schools Forum noted the information provided.**

1. **Future Meeting Plan**

Officers will reflect on requests for information during this meeting and update the plan accordingly.

It was requested that the January meeting next year is held a week later.

1. **Date of next meeting**

16 March 2022 09:00 – 11:30 - MS Teams meeting