**Norfolk Schools Forum**

**Minutes of Meeting held on Wednesday 30 September 2020**

**09:00 – 12:00 hours**

**Teams Meeting**

**Present: Representing**

Andrew Aalders-Dunthorne Academies

Keith Bates, Eaton Hall Specialist Academy Special School Academy

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

Carol Dallas, Taverham High School Academies

Alan Evans, Eastern MAT Academies

Mike Grimble, Avenue Junior School Primary Maintained Governors

Glyn Hambling, Unity Education Trust Alternative Provision

Carol Jaques Maintained Nursery School

Clare Jones, Boudica Schools Trust Academies

Howard Nelson, Diocese of Norwich

Education Diocesan Board of Education

Lacey Douglass Early Years Representative

Peter Pazitka, SJB CMAT Academies

Joanne Philpott, City of Norwich School Academies

Sarah Shirras, (Chair) St Williams Primary Primary Maintained Schools

Joanna Tuttle, Aylsham High School Secondary Maintained Schools

Vicky Warnes JCC (primary phase)

Martin White, Nebula Federation Primary Maintained Governors

Michael Bateman Programme Director SEND &

Alternative Provision

Martin Brock Accountant

John Crowley Assistant Director Learning and

Achievement

Sally Cutting Senior Accountant

Marilyn Edgeley Admin Officer

Dawn Filtness Finance Business Partner

Nicki Rider Senior Adviser – SEND & AP

Chris Snudden Assistant Director (Education)

**Apologies:**

Bob Groome JCC ( secondary phase)

Sara Tough Executive Director Childrens Services

1. **Welcome and Apologies**

The chair welcomed Joanna Rand representing Maintained Special Schools.

Apologies: Bob Groome

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

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 July 2020 were accepted as a true record except that it was noted that there was an inaccuracy in the previous minutes on page 3 section 4. ‘Staff’ should have said ‘STAR’.

* **Admissions Appeals**

The first meeting of this group took place on 24 September and looked at:

* Costs of appeals
* Responsibility of academy trusts
* What is funded by the authority and what is not funded
* Breakdown of costs pre-Covid and post-Covid

At the next meeting it was agreed:

* To ask Eric Clarke to attend to look at the on-line process versus the face to face process.
* Look at what are the parents and panel members response and how effective the processes are and if the on-line process could be used going forward. We will seek the views of all those involved.
* Look at trend of 3 years of data on appeals
* Explore costs in greater detail and also look at what processes other authorities have in place.
* Look at roles of local authorities and the role of schools and academies.
* Look at comms
* Next meeting for October to be arranged

Chris Caddamy will feed back to School Forum at the next meeting in November.

* **Early Years Reference Group**

This will be covered under item 4 on the agenda.

* **Norfolk HNB contributions to CAMHS compared to other LAs**

At previous meeting we suggested asking Rebecca Hulme, lead for mental health strategy to attend a future meeting to talk about CAMHS re-design, we have looked at when the timing will be right for this discussion and it is likely we will invite her to the November meeting. This relates to the following matters arising. (Action: Chris Snudden)

* **Pilot of better Integrated Services to Support Prevention and Inclusion**

Officers explained that this was a new piece of work with the ambition to join up our work in children’s services and wider stakeholders in health. To offer a more integrated approach with current services focused on supporting families at an early stage to achieve a more wrap around provision.. We are about to launch a pilot scheme in each district of the county. The next stage is to discuss with schools what will best suit their needs.

There will be further details at the next meeting.

Members were told that the timescale will depend on the progress of the pilot schemes which will last approximately over the next 4 weeks. We hope to achieve a more wrap around service by the end of the autumn term.

Members asked about the agenda for early intervention, officers said there were clearly indicators identified by schools and they were looking at using the helpline more broadly. Pilots will cover the full age range.

* **Report back on Alliance Group**

Sarah Shirras reported that she represents School Forum on The Alliance Group which was set up to look at CAMHS re-design. Sarah raised concerns that there was limited school representation on the board but this has now been increased. There has been some success in CAMHS during lockdown, they have implemented Kooth, which is an access point for 11+ year olds for mental health and wellbeing support.

The next challenge is to make sure new schools are fully integrated.

Rebecca Hulme will provide further information at a future meeting of the Forum.

1. **Elections**

It was noted that an academy election for 2 representatives will be held to replace a member who has resigned and because Carol Dallas will be asked to stand for re-election as her current term of office has ended.

Bob Groome and Vicky Warnes have come to the end of their current term of office and the Teacher’s Union has been approached but there are no other nominees. Therefore they will start a new 4 year term of office.

Keith Bates will come to the end of his current term of office in December, Keith will approach the other Special School Academies to find out if there are any other nominees.

Sarah said that when her term of office as Chair ends in January she will not stand for a further term and therefore she was giving notice that a new Chairperson would be needed. Anyone interested in knowing what the role entails should contact Sarah.

1. **Dedicated Schools Grant**

* Early Years Block Funding

Officers said this paper focuses on the opportunity to consult on the way Early Years funding is organised. There have been changes to the DSG and the time is right to consult on possibly a different funding model for Early Years.

The paper shows the way the formula is distributed and how it is spent. Changes to the conditions of grants mean we can now pass through more funding directly but there is an element of risk that funding will get to where it should be.

The recently held meeting of the Early Years Reference Group had gone well. There was broad representation and people came with an open mind looking at how funding effects the whole sector. Some people changed their point of view during discussions at the meeting.

Recommendations from the Reference Group focus on the consultation document having a broad approach. They discussed reducing the use of supplements but adding in rurality supplement as an option. The group did not think the EAL Supplement should be an option but that other ways of supporting these children should be considered. Group recognised we should model any changes for impact on providers to make sure none were adversely effected.

They felt 2 year old funding should be reviewed as well as 3 and 4 year old funding and any central services funding should come from both pots.

All options for change will increase the base rate and it is planned that the contingency is limited to 0.5% of the block.

**Section 5 in the paper lists the proposals for consultation**

The Early Reference Group did not think that supplements enabled providers to train staff to a higher level and at the current time we should focus on getting the base rate as high as it could be.

Officers highlighted the table in the consultation document which shows impact on different types of providers. Key point is that proposed changes would be an increase for all.

It was noted that Norfolk have the lowest national rate of funding and the authority will continue to lobby against this.

**Members comments:**

* Disappointing to see again in initial engagement no clear consensus and comments focusing on individual impact.
* Quality element some people are pushed into school system rather than early years.
* Make clear in the consultation paper the effects of less supplements and notional base rates.
* Agree whole system needs looking at but with safe guards in place
* Look at picture as a whole as in how many providers have shut and over what range and geographical area and include these in the consultation document.
* Capping of losses needs consideration

It was confirmed that the Early Years Consultation responses will be bought back to School Forum in November, for Schools Forum to make a recommendation to the Local Authority on a revised formula.

* High Needs Block Recovery Plan

Officers said the expectation from the DfE of this plan is to make sure the whole DSG balances. Primary pressure is the High Needs Block.

**Members were shown a PowerPoint presentation**

The Authority was required to submit a Recovery Plan and this was submitted to the DfE last summer. The plan based on a financial model done in 2018 which now requires a major refresh.

The Recovery Plan meeting with the DfE has been postponed until November due to the Covid pandemic.

**Context**

Officers wanted to consider a major refresh - the previous plan was modelled around the assumption that if no action was taken, increasing numbers of young people would be placed in the independent sector and any increase in maintained places would reduce independent places - It looked at reducing exclusions and EHCP plans.

Since the original model the position has changed, there is an increase in demand for ECHP plans and an unprecedented rise in tribunals. The cost of placements has increased. The places supplied by the capital programme is expected to be outstripped by demand. We have received some extra funding but not enough - so we have to look at a different model.

**Members Comments:**

* Declining savings to less than half by 2024/25 a disappointment.

*Officers said this was due to increased demand, savings will peak from benefits of extra provision before it levels off. This is a concern as capital programme is not sufficient if demand continues.*

**Members requested seeing components of capital programme and Officers confirmed this will be made clear in the consultation document.**

* Curriculum restrictions and if we could offer more flexibility to keep more of our children in schools.

*Officers agreed there needs to be more flexibility and will keep this in mind when talking to DfE.*

* Look at Trusts excluding more frequently.

*Officers said we are all calling for the Timpson report to be published and we are looking at these trusts.*

* Demand outstripping capital programme an underlying flaw and the inability to predict demand.
* At the same time of building new provision we need to focus on work stream 1 and drive down demand.

*Officers agreed this was key to success in driving down the deficit.*

* School not supporting a plan and parents choices increasing.

*Officer said there was more analysis being done.*

* Unit costs a lot less for maintained special school places than independent special school places.

*Officers agreed this equates to one in independent to every 2 in state funded.*

* Critical to look at funding for children that could stay in maintain places.

*Officers said difficult to know what demand will be but agreed on importance of High Needs Inclusion.*

*Officers said the biggest assumption is demand.*

Officers added that benefits and savings for children going into the new schools is clear but the bottom line is that the deficit is still increasing.

The reason for requesting £120m capital was that we wanted the choice of having a fourth school but we were hoping this would not be needed. This has now been built into the planning.

Tribunals do not take into account strategic planning. We are trying to make sure we have control on admissions in new schools.

Members asked what will be put forward at the meeting with the DfE, it was confirmed that the LA is modelling the recovery plan on the basis of a 1.5% transfer from Schools Block to High Needs Block each year.

Members also asked how we will deal with a £52m accumulative deficit in 2024/25. This is as far as the LA can mitigate the deficit based on current funding from the government. The LA will be discussing this with the DfE.

Officers said that Norfolk is not alone and our current deficit is not as high as some other authorities. This is the reality at the moment.

We are looking at a recovery plan that will take us as close as we can to recovering the deficit however we cannot ourselves recover this entirely.

Members requested that they receive copies of the PowerPoint presentation. Officers agreed but said members must bear in mind that this is not yet in the public domain. Officers said that an amended version to include the points made today would be circulated.

* **Schools Block Fair Funding Consultation**

Officers said that having discussed the DSG Recovery plan emphasized the need for the options in this paper. It was highlighted that no school should lose funding from on a like-for-like basis whichever of the three options are chosen.

**Members comments on Fair Funding paper and proposed options:**

* The paper is not selling a compelling message to encourage colleagues to put funding into an endless pot by saying everyone is in the same boat.
* Drop in the ocean in the bigger picture

*Officers said members were right but there is no selling point apart from that unless we are doing everything we can we are not in a position to ask the DfE to do something significant to meet this problem. The Executive Directors of Childrens Services and Finance for NCC will be writing to the Secretary of State to advise of the situation, including the very challenging position that local authorities and schools are in due to under-funding of specialist provision.*

In November there will need to be a fresh decision from Schools Forum whether to support a 0.5% transfer from the Schools block to the High Needs block for 2021-22. If the Forum decides not to support a transfer, the authority will have no choice be to write to the Secretary of State under the current regulations with a disapplication request.

Members said that the consultation needs to interpret votes from different organisations and how many organisations a respondent represents and how many children.

Detailed modelling – Teachers’ pay and pension grants have been separated out within the modelling.

Members said that it was much clearer this year that this was an authority consultation that comes back to Schools Forum.

* **Amalgamation Protection - Disapplication**

Costessey Infant School and Costessey Junior School amalgamated 1st November 2019, to become one larger school and qualified for the first year of amalgamation protection in 2020/21.

The latest disapplication (of regulations) request form for making an application on behalf of schools for a second year of protection requires the local authority to state whether Schools Forum has agreed to the request being made. The request being made for 2021/22 is as follows:

A second year of amalgamation protection for Costessey Primary School, at 70% of two lump sums, calculated as follows:

£114,400 x 2 x 70% = £160,160, minus one original lump sum value of £114,400 = **£45,760 protection.**

**Action required:**

**Schools Forum agreed the application of a second (and final) year of amalgamation protection for Costessey Primary School, at 70% of two lump sums, for the 2021/22 financial year.**

1. **Updates on Scheme for Financing Schools**

**(Financial Regulations)**

Forum recently received updates to bring the scheme up to date for 2020/21.

There ae now 2 more directed revisions come through from the Secretary of State. We are required to put the two revisions as stated in the paper so this item is for information only.

These revisions will be updated as soon as possible in Norfolk’s 2020/21 Scheme for Financing Schools and a new version of the document will be uploaded onto the Norfolk Schools Website at the following link:

<https://www.schools.norfolk.gov.uk/school-finance/scheme-for-financing-schools>

Schools Forum noted the information provided.

1. **Any Other Business**

Jo Tuttle highlighted the issue of families not prepared to send their children back to schools and those children coming off roll who will then later be entered into the school population when parents confidence grows.

Officers said that this is being monitored nationally.

The Chair asked colleagues to highlight the importance of alerting their schools to the importance of responding to the Fair Funding Consultation.

1. **Date of next meeting**

Members should get in touch if they have any questions prior to the next meeting on

13 November 2020 – 09:00am to 11.30am