**Norfolk Schools Forum**

**Minutes of Meeting held on Friday 13 November 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

Bob Groome JCC ( secondary phase)

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

Martin Brock Accountant

Sarah Young, Sidestrand Hall (sub) Maintained Special Schools

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:**

Sara Tough Executive Director Childrens Services

Michael Bateman Programme Director SEND &

 Alternative Provision

Joanna Rand, Hall School Maintained Special Schools

1. **Welcome and Apologies**

Michael Bateman

Joanna Rand – sub Sarah Young

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

The minutes of the meeting held on 30 September 2020 were accepted as a true record.

Pupils coming off roll, parents uneasy about sending their children to school and home educating and the census date in October impacting on funding to schools.

**Action: Chris Snudden will follow this up and look at any schools significantly affected.**

Glyn Hambling said that he communicated with the DfE on 15 October in relation to the census and the impact of universal free school meals take-up in year 1 and 2. The DfE are looking into his communication.

The Chair highlighted that maintained schools have an avenue to discuss this with a finance officer but academy trusts should raise if a pattern is emerging.

**Report back from Alliance Group**

**Action: Rebecca Hulme to be invited to a future Forum meeting**

**Pilot of better integrated services to support Prevention & Inclusion**

This work is in relation to supporting children’s needs in the wider sense, and the Local Authority has been working with IMPower, a company that supports development and innovation in local authorities. Next term, the LA wants to offer a more systematic geographical coverage to an integrated approach within the early intervention offer. There are trials in place with a small number of schools. Officers will be circulating soon something to show how this will look from a school prospective.

**3a. Early Years Block Funding**

Officers apologised for the late circulation of this paper. There had been a good response to the survey. The paper covers feedback and proposed changes to the formula based upon the responses. Formal recommendation from Forum for the formula changes is requested, alongside agreement for 5% of 3-to-4-year-old funding to be utilised to fund central services.

The background information had been available to Forum previously.

The survey was broken down into several sections.

A total of 106 responses were received from ofsted registrations and covered a range of the early years sector.

Officers said it was worth noting that the responses were split into different types of providers. Providers at the most risk of financial loss are those receiving quality and flexibility supplements.

Option 1 and 3 as first choice were most popular, then option 2, which is the compromise option that reduces, rather than removes, supplements entirely, with 4 and 5 being the least popular. Therefore, officers view was that options 4 and 5 should be ignored at this stage, with concentration on options 1,2 and 3.

Officers explained the impacts of options 1,2 and 3:

Option 1 – does not address concerns for providers who are unable to meet the requirements for supplements

Option 2 – midway proposal that partly addresses concerns but will ensure stability in the market

Option 3 – simple approach but the loss to some providers could be too much too soon and risk destabilising the market.

It was suggested that the Early Years Reference Group is reconvened as a sub-group of the Forum to continue to explore the issues identified through the feedback to this consultation, as well as looking ahead as to how Norfolk moves towards a formula based upon the principles of option 3.

The Early Years PVI representative said that she agreed with the proposals put forward and that this had been a fair and thorough piece of work.

Deprivation supplement is mandatory but the amount is partially within our control. There was not overwhelming support either way so it was recommended to make no change to the amount for deprivation.

There was some support for a SEN Inclusion Fund, but not overwhelming. It is the view of Officers that the contribution to central services had not been fully understood. The authority could explore full 5% or partial reduction but it was thought this was not the time to do this.

It was felt that this was not the right time to link the Early Years National Funding Formula base rate to the Norfolk base rate as there had been a mixed response to this proposal, and not doing so will leave the option open to move towards removing supplements without destabilising the market if there are future rises in the EYNFF base rate.

**Schools Forum are asked to** **make a recommendation to the Local Authority the 2021-22 early years funding formula in respect of:**

* **Base rate and supplement options for funding formula**
* **Deprivation criteria**
* **Central services and SEN Inclusion Fund from 2-year-old hourly rate**
* **Link between EYNFF base rate and local base rate**
* **Vote on retention of 5% of 3- and 4-year-old allocation for central services**

**Decision**

**Forum supported option 2 at this time with the intention of moving to option 3 in the future and agreed to all recommendations as listed above.**

**Forum agreed to the retention of 5% of 3- and 4-year old allocation for central services.**

**3b. Central Services de-delegation**

Schools Forum are asked to vote separately by **maintained Primary and Secondary sector** on de-delegation of the below services (representatives of those sectors only). **Nursery schools** and **Special Schools** are offered services as a buy back option, as they are not covered by de-delegation under the statutory finance regulations.

Members asked for more specific modelling in the future for SACRE costs and fees to independent boarding schools. Officers said that there were a small number of children on the edge of care, provision was sought for a fresh start. This works well and the authority wants to continue this.

**Action: Officers agreed to look into what is provided by SACRE and Seb Gasse will attend a future meeting to give more information.**

**1a Staff Costs - primary maintained schools**

Agreed to de-delegation of services

**1b Staff Costs - secondary maintained schools**

Secondary schools do not wish to de-delegate services

**2a Free School Meals Eligibility -primary maintained schools**

Agreed to de-delegation of services

**2b Free School Meal Eligibility – secondary maintained schools**

Agreed to de-delegation of services

**3a Maintained Special Schools Buyback**

Agreed to buyback

**3b Academy Special Schools Buyback**

Agreed to buy back at meeting but subsequently changed to not wishing to buyback

**4 Maintained Nursery Schools Buyback**

Agreed to buyback

**5 Growth (full School Forum)**

Agreed

**6a Use of central retained items (full School Forum)**

Agreed

**6b Agree historic commitments (full School Forum)**

Agreed

**6c Items retained from central services**

Agreed

**3c. Fair Funding Consultation**

This item summarises the responses to the Autumn 2020 Fair Funding Consultation with Norfolk schools, and sets out the proposed changes to the funding distribution formula of the Schools Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) from April 2021.

The results of the survey showed that schools did not favour a Schools Block to High Needs Block transfer.

Officers understand that this is a difficult choice for Forum members as schools want the extra money in their budgets to support pupils in their school, but at the same time acknowledged that Forum are considering the bigger picture.

**Comments:**

Q. Does the plan include current assumptions about additional places?

A. Built in as anticipated based on current opening dates. Officers have built in assumptions for a 4th special school. This latest version of the plan shows that if growth continues as currently seen we will not be able to reduce the need for independent school places in Norfolk.

Q. Have we got a revised strategy and is there a review of that strategy and have we communicated this? What is the quality of that independent provision?

A. We are having on-going discussions at a national level of the lack of funding for SEN pupils. We are refreshing our sufficiency strategy and we will be able to provide the detail. We have a number of children awaiting provision, so we are dependent on independent school. Quality and cost is an issue in the independent sector, but the alternative result from tribunals could be children being placed into inadequate settings.

Q. Forum is being asked to consider recommendations without a revised plan. Funding in alternative provision – there is a decline in numbers, people need to understand why.

1. Alternative Provision decline in numbers relates to closure of Horatio House otherwise there is not a reduction in alternative provision.

Q. What are the long term implications of the accumulative deficit and what would happen if in 2024/25 the DfE say that we can no longer run this deficit as this would then come from the Schools Block? Who is funding the deficit in the meantime?

1. Whilst the model now has much more accurate predictions, we acknowledge that post 16 is not as detailed as the pre-16 sector. The DfE say that the DSG needs to offset any cumulative deficit; the authority is bank rolling the DSG and we are monitoring the risk.

Members asked for commentary clouds against any change in lines on the tables moving forward.

Q. What happens if we do not transfer the 1.5%?

A. Expectation on authorities that have a deficit is that they look at the whole DSG. Therefore, Officers feel we have to pursue a higher level of School Block transfer, whether agreed by School Forum or not. We have told the DfE that they are putting authorities in a position where they have no choice but to make the disapplication request.

Members said the number of responses to the consultation was disappointing.

There is an issue around some mainstream settings and their level of inclusivity that is contributing to parents requesting special school places.

Currently these children are in mainstream schools and funding for this is not sufficient, so to take more money away from schools means less money to support these children.

* **Vote on continuation of the movement of 0.5% from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block for 2021-22;**

For 15

Against 0

Abstain 2

* **Consider and comment on the movement of additional funding (an additional 1%) to the High Needs Block for 2021-22**.

Members asked that the minutes include comments made on the challenges for schools from Schools Forum.

Everyone wants to do the right thing but pull on both sides.

The authority is being put in an impossible situation and we, as School Forum representing different sectors, unions and academies and anyone involved with young children, want to say that we are really concerned about the funding levels and the impossible situation. We all believe there should be a thorough review of how we can meet the guidance that the government have given, and we will not be able to achieve this unless more money is put in.

One member said they would not support the 1% as this does not deal with the deficit and the plan needs reviewing.

Officers asked if there was any support for the 1% transfer.

There was no support for this from Forum.

1. **Admissions Appeals**

This is deferred to next meeting.

1. **Academy Elections**

It was noted that we have a vacancy for two academy representatives on the Forum and 2 designated subs. With the current situation due to covid-19 it has been decided to extend the period for nominations to be returned. The chair asked members to encourage colleagues to put themselves forward.

1. **Any other business**

Balance Control Mechanism

Members raised the issue of some schools holding more money than they expected due to current covid-19 situation. A pragmatic approach from the authority is requested to the balance control mechanism this year.

**Action: It was agreed to raise this with financial colleagues and bring back to a future meeting.** It was noted that any changes to the Scheme for Financing Schools, if required, would need a Forum vote.

1. **Date of next meeting**

13 January 2021 09:00 – 12:00