**Norfolk Schools Forum**

**Minutes of Meeting held on Wednesday 16 November 2022 at Easton College**

**09:00 – 12:30 hours**

**Present: Representing**

Lisa Barton (sub) 16 – 19 Representative

Steven Dewing (Sub) Academies

Lacey Douglass Early Years Representative

Mike Grimble, Avenue Junior School Primary Maintained Governors

Glyn Hambling, Unity Education Trust Alternative Provision

David Hicks Academies

Adrian Lincoln (sub) National Education Union

Howard Nelson, Diocese of Norwich Diocesan Board of Education

Peter Pazitka, SJB CMAT Academies

Joanne Philpott, City of Norwich School Academies

Sarah Porter, The Heart Education Trust Academies

Rachel Quick, The Wherry School Special School Academy

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

Martin Brock Accountant (Schools, SEND & EY)

Marilyn Edgeley Admin Officer

Dawn Filtness Finance Business Partner

Sam Fletcher Interim Assistant Director, Education Strategy & Infrastructure

Jo-anne Lamb Senior Advisor – Early Years Learning

**Apologies:**

Adrian Ball, Diocese of Ely Multi Academy Academies

Michael Bateman Assistant Director, SEND Strategic Improvement & Early Effectiveness

John Crowley Assistant Director, Learning & Achievement

Martin Colbourne, City College 16 – 19 Representative

Bob Groome National Education Union

Carol Jacques Maintained Nursery School

Clare Jones, Boudica Schools Trust Academies

Nicki Rider Head of High Needs SEND

Chris Snudden Director of Learning & Inclusion

David Shaw, Creative Education Trust Academies

Sara Tough Executive Director Childrens Services

1. **Welcome and Introductions**

The Chair highlighted that this was the last meeting before Chris Snudden retires. He wished to thank her for her support for schools and the schools Forum.

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

An error was noted on page 4 of the minutes and agreed to be correct: 20225/26 replaced by 2025/26.

The minutes were agreed as a true record.

**Appointment of Vice Chair**

It was noted that Sarah Porter, as notified to Members via email, had withdrawn her nomination for vice-chair for personal reasons since the last meeting and, therefore, Glyn Hambling had accepted appointment to the role.

**School Catering Contract**

Officers had sought both legal and procurement advice – timing not ideal, down to staffing.

No need to procure however with volatile markets and considering costs it was thought not appropriate to enter another 3-year contract at this stage, and so Officers pursued an extension to the current contract for one year with inflationary increases only. Norse have agreed an extension and the cost will be an inflationary cost.

This is a NCC Member’s decision which will be undertaken asap. NCC have written to schools this week. Schools can contract James Stanford with any concerns.

Officers confirmed costs will be made clear once the NCC Member decision has been concluded.

**Safety Valve Executive Board**

The Chair of Schools Forum made the decision regarding who will represent the Forum on the Board and confirmed the names via email to all Members since the last meeting:

Lacey Douglass

Glyn Hambling

Sarah Porter

Rachel Quick

Jo Tuttle

Martin White

The first planned meeting will be January 2023. There will be Terms of Reference and will include replacements if people are unable to attend meetings. It was agreed that the same number of people representing Forum should attend each meeting.

**Central Schools Services Block**

The Chair said that information had been requested and a meeting with primary maintained representatives did not happen.

**Item 4b in minutes – Fair Funding Consultation**

Concerns from Norfolk Governors Network (NGN) about communications around the Fair Funding Consultation – too little communication with governors.

Officers said a presentation was supposed to have been placed earlier on the Governors hub; they acknowledged that the timing had not been quick enough. Officers confirmed that they will work closer with NGN in the future.

1. **Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG)**
2. **Schools Block (including consultation outcomes and Schools Block transfer decision)**

Officers reported that 37 responses had been received to the Fair Funding Consultation.

The options mirror the National Funding Formula factors and values.

**General comments and views from Forum Members**

MW – Comments show a disconnect and people not understanding

If you don’t know where the comments come from will not understand the context

MG - Small number of schools responding so still not an accurate view of how people feel

Quick turnaround of consultation

They still think HN Block LA issue – don’t think the message came across

We have to go for 1.5 % if we are going to support the Safety Valve Programme

SS – 61 did not complete response so didn’t they understand it – interesting to analyse why this was

Officer response – clearly because they did not complete, we could not use.

SD – Problem of understanding - so complicated – our governors did not respond as did not understand

HN - You will submit a disapplication for 1.5 %

All our schools in deficit so hard to say yes to 1.5 %

JP – I sensed a general sense of fatigue from the comments

Think people are bothered but see survey as utterly meaningless

SS – Concerns around finance, staffing retention

Not enough information on Safety Valve and its benefits

GH – Question put to me if 1.5 % agreed and Safety Valve not successful what then?

Need to think carefully how we consult – and brief schools carefully

Consultation has to be meaningful

Officer response – Need to look at next stages of delivering Safety Valve programme – looking at January meeting with information in advance to consider

GH – Lots of understanding from people involved in conversations but this did not happen before consultation

Officers confirmed governors will be included in conversations

Officers confirmed Early Years sector will be involved in conversations

JP – In terms of the disconnect when schools are applying for element 3 funding you have got a very historical message there

SP – none of us actually know what our budgets will be for SEND in the Spring term – absolutely no clarity at all – the issue for us as a Trust is we would be taking this 1% from the core budgets will be the non-SEND children that will be losing that funding and the money coming back in will be earmarked for SEND children – so not inclusive

MW – We should register our thoughts from last year that the reason we are in this difficult position is because of the funding of the HNB and its underfunding. Important to emphasise.

GH – Think about what it will do – difficult because we need outcomes

MW – I do not have total confidence of buying in of everybody

RQ – Big issue around schools feeling not able to meet needs of children

Concerns of rapid removal of funding for private sector – not realistic

Safety Valve not telling us the speed things are going to be done

Officer response – I get that it is about the confidence and understanding of the plan

MW – Forum would be very interested to see the communication plan

SD – Suffolk funded lower but not putting this pressure on schools

MG – We are maintaining the deficit – Safety Valve can reduce it

Vote on continuation of the movement of 0.5% from Schools Block to the High Needs Block for 2023-24.

For: 14

Against: 0

Abstain: 2

**Members views upon the specific question of support, or otherwise, for the disapplication request by the LA for the additional 1% block transfer:**

Sarah Porter – I can’t support the 1% at the moment just because of current financial situation. Everybody is facing a black hole and they don’t know how big that black hole is going to be and don’t know what the situation is going to be.

Howard Nelson – Can’t support the 1% for similar reasons – the government have to look at this situation differently otherwise we will be here in another 4 years having a similar conversation.

Rebecca Wicks – From a special school point of view we need money, but I am not supportive because of the effect it is going to have on every other child.

Rachel Quick – I concur - we haven’t got capacity at this point in time - we can’t take children so need the money to support children in schools`.

Steven Dewing – Don’t support

Lacey Douglass – Not for me to support or not support -I feel pressure everyone under.

Mike Grimble – Whole system needs to be worked out, if we say no, we are not supporting the whole system – I understand individual school views. My concerns not seeing any benefit coming through. Got to succeed. Have to support the safety valve. Have to support 1%.

Sarah Shirras – Reluctantly support – has to be some outcomes. System engagement is vital.

Jo Tuttle – Same as Mike and Sarah.

Joanne Philpott – I agree – want to see what benefits there will be – whole system has to work not just about building more schools. From baseline upwards through to assessment, screening, support, further education, the whole system is broken and has to be fixed. Sacrifice of 1% I will go with that.

David Hicks – Can’t support.

Adrian Lincoln – From union point of view suspect we have to remain neutral.

Vicky Warnes – Yes agree neutral have to support all our members.

Lisa Barton – Can’t support anything that takes money away from the front line.

Glyn Hambling – I will support the option in principle as trying to mend the system. Needs to be further accountability from this group in a years’ time against that project and against the outcomes. Reluctant to impact on finances any further but we have to stop the rot.

Peter Pazitka – Wanted to see the benefit of extra transfers but the loss of immediate income - can’t support the 1%.

Martin White – We have slipped into this position over many years. Want to support plan, believe the plan has a chance of putting things right particularly if the government actually produce some funding to help us with the ongoing deficit – communication not good but I support the extra 1% at this time but that would not be my view ongoing year on year without seeing some impact of the plan after the first year

**Funding Cap:**

Martin Brock went through the options in the paper.

Comments:

A discussion followed with a mixture of preferences for adjusting MFG for those schools effected or sticking with a ‘hard cap’ because that was the purpose of having a capping system. No conclusion on any particular option was reached, though no member was in favour of option 4.

Officers were asked what would happen if no recommendation for a particular option was received and they advised that with no clear recommendation they would recommend the status quo to NCC’s Cabinet as there is no clear mandate to make a change from the National Funding Formula.

**Schools Forum did not make a recommendation**

**Changes to Scheme for Financing Schools**

Martin Brock went through the options in the paper.

Comments:

SS – BMP does not do anything for development work

Third paragraph quite arbitrary – schools make a valid reason and then LA does not agree with it

MW – Takes out bureaucracy in process

MG – Surprised at schools that did not feel happy with 8%

Maintained School Members were asked to approve the proposed changes.

MW – illogical that you could have money clawed back that would make a deficit in year 3 worse

MG – only one minor clawback in previous years

**Analysis of Balance**

**For: Unanimous**

**School Building Maintenance holding account**

**For: Unanimous**

**3b. De-delegation/CSS Block**

**Decision 1a -** Should staff cost budgets for the primary sector be de-delegated? (To be agreed by maintained primary representatives).

**Yes**

**Decision 1b –** Should staff cost budgets for the secondary sector be de-delegated? (To be agreed by the maintained secondary representative).

**Agreed to de-delegate for ‘Special Circumstances’ only**

**Decision 2 –** To agree de-delegation of a contingency at an indicative rate of £8.46 per-pupil for 2023/24 from maintained schools’ budgets, for a budget of £277k (to be agreed by all maintained school representatives).

**Comments on Decision 2**

MW - Why are we being asked to do this?

Schools are supported by lead officer

Deficit must have been huge before any actions put in place by headteacher

Officer response – we appreciate amount per pupil significant but there has been a lot of work put in to reduce costs

SS – not fair on other schools

MW – when was delegation removed?

**Action – I will find out (SF)**

MG – looking at diminishing amount of maintained schools having to stump up money - this system will be disastrous

MW – delegated budgets should have been removed

**Decision: No**

**Decision 3a –** Should Free School Meals eligibility be de-delegated for the primary sector (maintained)? (To be agreed by maintained primary representatives).

**Yes**

**Decision 3b –** Should Free School Meal eligibility be de-delegated for the secondary sector (maintained)? (To be agreed by the maintained secondary representative).

**Yes**

**Decision 4 –** Should £150k for two full time adviser posts be de-delegated at an estimated rate of £4.58 per-pupil? (Maintained schools’ representatives only).

**No**

**Comments:**

SS - To be asked to vote without information we have requested for is disrespectful

MW – Should be a buy in system. Should be paid for in a different way

**Decision 5a -** The maintained special school representative is asked to decide on the buyback of services for all maintained special schools in the 2023-24 financial year.

**Yes**

**Decision 5b -** The academy special school representative is asked to decide on the buyback of services for academy special schools in the 2023-24 financial year.

**No**

**Decision 6 -** The maintained nursery school representative is asked to decide on the buyback of services for maintained nursery schools in the 2023-24 financial year.

**Nursery representative was not present therefore a decision will be sought after this meeting**

**Decision 7a –** To approve a £1.101m centrally retained fund for pre-16 growth in 2023-24 (vote for all Schools Forum members)

JP – Gap in information on some sections of growth plans

**Action: these are published in January – will go back to Isabel Horner for more information that we can share (SF)**

**For: unanimous**

**Decision 7b –** To approve the pre-16 growth fund criteria as detailed in section 1.7 of this paper (vote for all Schools Forum members)

Schools Forum are required to approve the retention of Central School Services Block items (vote by all members)

**For: Unanimous**

**Decision 8a –** To approve the level of Admissions funding (£487,011).

**For: Unanimous**

**Decision 8b –** To approve the level of funding for Schools Forum (£30,000).

**For: Unanimous**

**Decision 8c –** To approve the level of funding for Fees to Independent Schools for pupil without SEN (£100,000).

Forum Members asked for further information regarding how these funds would be used and it was agreed that Officers would provide further information for a decision in January

**Bring back in January for a decision**

**Decision 8d –** To approve the level of contribution towards the Director of Learning & Inclusion central budgets - Early Intervention and Achievement (£119,700).

Following a query, Officers confirmed that the heading should have been changed for this decision to reflect that there will not be a Director from January but there will be leadership roles from across Norfolk’s schools sector that will require funding.

Forum Members asked for further information regarding how these funds would be used and it was agreed that Officers would provide further information for a decision in January

**Bring back in January for a decision**

**Decision 8e –** To approve the level of Termination of Employment Costs (£64,994).

**For: Unanimous**

**Decision 9** – Schools Forum (all members) to approve funding for responsibilities held for all schools from Central School Services Block, including Teachers’ Pay Grant and Teachers’ Pension Employer Contribution Grant for centrally employed staff (£2,566,546).

Forum Members asked for further information regarding how these funds would be used and it was agreed that Officers would provide further information for a decision in January

**Bring back in January for a decision**

**3c. Notional SEN**

Martin Brock presented this paper.

Comments on from Forum Members regarding proposed survey:

SS – Feels very complicated

Some schools looking at this think they will get more money

JT – Does not seem to run in parallel with the Safety Valve Programme – having to justify a higher level of SEN funding in the first place

SD –Complexity of this - don’t think will get useful information – moving money around on a piece of paper or sounds like another cut.

JP – Feels like evidence gathering not a consultation

MW – Could be a benefit if schools were suggesting they are spending hardly any money

SP – Feels like another barrier for claiming SEN. Pot to spend on other children getting less and less

MW – Schools will see through this

SP – Making it harder to be inclusive

MW – Come back to Forum in January – could provide us with useful information – if we could sell it as an information gathering exercise may be of benefit that may be useful in communications with DfE. Would not want to see this as way of increasing the notional SEN.

Officers said they would note the feedback and amend the engagement paper and survey accordingly and then make sure information was available in January to support a decision.

**3d Early Years Block 2023 – 24 Funding Formula Update**

Jo-anne Lamb presented this paper.

The survey has now closed and there were 261 responses – 148 completed.

Officers will analyse the responses and bring back to Forum in January.

A consultative group is being set up and will meet on 30 November.

1. **MyOracle**

John Baldwin presented this item covering feedback received, action taken to date and action planned.

A group of Forum representatives met with Sam Fletcher and John a few weeks ago to discuss the issues schools have with the system. The Chair said this was useful.

Officers decided to hold a meeting and gather views from other schools around what the current concerns are.

Officers had agreed to look at:

* operational implementation
* improve engagement in communications – John Baldwin completed a report yesterday
* look at from strategic implementation aspect and how NCC dealt with the process

Sam Fletcher will discuss the conclusions with Sara Tough

John Baldwin said his report was not finished in time to circulate prior to this meeting but can be made available.

John Baldwin said he did have concerns about the process to implement the new pay awards into the new system.

GH – I share your concerns to pay moving forward.

Clarity about understanding FAQ essential

JT – can’t emphasise enough how important to get pay awards right – should have been tested months ago

MW – Forum will want a report back in January to how the process went

JT – If you know there is going to be an issue we need to know

John Baldwin – We will know early in December if there are significant problems. Won’t know if system has picked up smaller amounts of money. There will be a manual activity post run and we need to put out clear information about this.

A new pay slip will be available soon that will be easier to understand.

JT-Can you bring payroll forward to Friday?

John Baldwin – people will be able to access their payslips Thursday night/Friday

SS – System needs to put mistakes right not schools.

1. **Future Plan**

Agreed next meeting will be at Easton College and future meetings would be face to face.

1. **Next Meeting**

The next meeting is on 27 January 2023 – it was agreed that this be held in room JB031, Jubilee Building, Easton College.

1. **AOB**

None