**Norfolk Schools Forum**

**Minutes of Meeting held on Friday 12 March 2021**

**09:15 – 11:45 hours**

**Teams Meeting**

**Present: Representing**

Paul Bland, (Sub)West Norfolk Academies

Trust Academies

Andrew Aalders-Dunthorne Academies

Keith Bates, Eaton Hall Specialist Academy Special School Academy

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

Lacey Douglass Early Years Representative

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

Howard Nelson, Diocese of Norwich Diocesan Board of Education

Clare Jones, Boudica Schools Trust Academies

Adrian Lincoln (sub) JCC (primary phase)

Peter Pazitka, SJB CMAT Academies

Joanne Philpott, City of Norwich School Academies

David Shaw, Creative Education Trust Academies

Sarah Shirras, St Williams Primary Primary Maintained Schools

Joanna Tuttle, Aylsham High School Secondary Maintained Schools

Vicky Warnes JCC (primary phase)

Martin White, (Chair) Nebula Federation Primary Maintained Governors

Martin Brock Accountant

Sally Cutting Senior Accountant

John Crowley Assistant Director Learning and

Achievement

Marilyn Edgeley Admin Officer

Dawn Filtness Finance Business Partner

Chris Snudden Assistant Director (Education)

**Apologies:**

Carol Jacques Maintained Nursery School

Sarah Porter, The Heart Education Trust Academies

Joanna Rand, Hall School Maintained Special Schools

Sara Tough Executive Director Childrens Services

1. **Apologies**

Apologies were received from Carole Jacques, Joanna Rand and Sarah Porter with

Paul Bland attending as an Academy Substitute.

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

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 January 2021 were accepted as a true record.

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

Officers reported receiving a letter from the Department for Education (DfE) following the High Needs Recovery Meeting refusing our disapplication request and were not in agreement with the reasons given for that refusal.

The letter stated that the dis-application request was rejected because the authority’s plans were underdeveloped and consequently was not supported by Schools Forum.

A strongly worded reply was sent from Sara Tough to the Deputy Director who oversees school funding and to the team who sent the letter objecting to the incorrect assumptions made. A letter was also sent from Cllr John Fisher (Lead Member for Children’s Services) to Gavin Williamson (Secretary of State) to advise that, contrary to these incorrect assumptions, the authority had, in fact, extensive plans in place. NCC has received a sympathetic reply from the DfE, with some apology, though there was no reference to some issues raised. Norfolk County Council (NCC) will be making a further response.

A first draft has been prepared of a letter to be sent to the Secretary of State jointly from the current Chair and previous Chair of Forum.

Successful contact has been with some Eastern Region Schools Forums in relation to the sending of a joint letter, but this is at early days of co-ordinating something.

**Action:**

* **Further contact to be made with Eastern Region Schools Forums that have responded positively to the suggestion of a joint letter being sent. Continue to keep other Forums in the loop.**
* **Letter to the Secretary of State from past Chair and current Chair of Forum to be sent ASAP to correct the assumption that the School Forum was not aware of the authorities plans for the DSG Recovery.**

1. **Dedicated Schools Grant**

**Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE)**

The Chair of SACRE has provided the circulated report however Officers understand this does not fully address the issues raised so we will give a brief update of how funding for SACRE works.

The DSG contributes £5,000 per year to SACRE. Officers are responsible for making sure SACRE works as a body. Norfolk SACRE has worked extremely well in creating a syllabus which is getting recognition and is seen as a model of good practice. The authority supports SACRE with an officer, Sarah Burgess, as a senior advisor. None of the £5,000 is used for the local authority part of that operation, but SACRE do need funding to facilitate clerking and funding for travel expenses and supply claims. Funding is also required for accessing professional advice and for implementing and monitoring the syllabus.

The funding is in SACRE’s control but as it goes through NCC books, we make sure that there is due process in the way procurement is working.

With the current public health situation they have struggled spending the money but are now commencing the monitoring phase of the syllabus implementation. All schools, apart from faith schools, have to implement the SACRE syllabus.

**High Needs Block Update**

This item is supported by a PowerPoint presentation from Michael Bateman, Programme Director Special Educational Needs & Alternative Provision. Officers wanted to share information on the Department for Education (DfE) High Needs Block Consultation sent out to Local Authorities. Additionally, there has also been a letter from the Children’s Minister sent to families about Covid and Special Educational Needs, and Officers also wanted to share with Forum the likely themes of a forthcoming consultation, from the DfE, regarding the outcome of The SEND National Review.

Authorities have until the 24 March to respond to the High Needs Block consultation; Officers took the opportunity to set out the questions within the consultation so that Schools Forum are aware of the LA’s planned response. The consultation is about the formula funding for 2022/23. Officers said they would keep in focus the SEND National Review when formulating a response to the consultation; the DfE themselves have set out that this HNB consultation is likely to be the first of a series to link with the National SEND Review outcomes in future years.

The presentation consists of 5 questions and members will be able to access this on the Schools Forum website after this meeting.

To access the presentation click on the link below:

<https://www.schools.norfolk.gov.uk/school-finance/norfolk-schools-forum/forum-agendas-and-papers>

The proposals could see an increase of £2.6m for the High Needs Block in Norfolk with the maximum 12% cap. If the cap is not applied this would be, approximately, double.

With regard to the forthcoming outcome of the National SEND Review, it was confirmed that Norfolk were invited to a ‘round table’ discussion with those leading the SEND review from the DfE and 12 other LA’s; this was at Director of Children’s Services level and, therefore, Norfolk is in a position to influence the review directly.

Note: the response to the consultation was submitted on 24 March and a copy of that response is available on the Agendas and Papers section of the Schools Forum web page which you can access by clicking the link below.

<https://www.schools.norfolk.gov.uk/school-finance/norfolk-schools-forum/forum-agendas-and-papers>

**Members Comments:**

Q. Good that the government are reviewing this. The base year 17/18 is £77m we are now currently at £99m so we are already £20m adrift. Can this be fed into the process?

*Response - Agree seems clear government not keen on going beyond 17/18 – using 18/19 data would be better and we can make this point and could point out that in 17/18 we were still in the process of transferring statements to EHCPs.*

**This paper is for information.**

**Pupil Variations 2021/22**

Officers brought estimated data that would be used in the APT submissions to the Forum Meeting in January. Actual figures are now available. The figure has changed by £240 because the consultation formula had a 1.73% Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) the final MFG was 1.66%.

**This paper is for information.**

1. **Scheme for Financing Schools**

New information has been issued from the DfE which results in a change to the Scheme for Financing Schools. Currently the Scheme states if a school is in the Building Maintenance Partnership (BMP) Scheme they cannot lodge maintenance money with the local authority. However, there are two schemes available: full membership, which includes maintenance, or compliance only membership. The intention here is that if schools are in the compliance only membership, and, therefore, not the maintenance contract part, that they would be able to lodge money for maintenance purposes. This is so that they are not disadvantaged and have an alternative to the BMP Scheme.

Due a mis-understanding at the time of preparing the report, the report was written as if it is already happening and that this is guidance catching up. However, it was subsequently identified that this was not the case and so School Forum approval is being sought.

**Member Comment:**

The compliance actually costs money (30%) if you are in the BMP Scheme, should this be netted against the total that can be lodged?

*It should not affect the amount that can be set aside for maintenance.*

Does this change have any administrative burden for the authority?

*It was thought not.*

Officers had concerns that if we have schools only in the compliance scheme and are unable to lodge money for maintenance, could be quite an issue around their financial planning and sustainability. The LA would want to encourage schools that are not part of the full BMP scheme to ensure that they have appropriate planning for maintenance costs.

**Schools Forum is asked to agree local changes to the wording of section 4.2 (e) of the Scheme for Financing Schools, required to bring it into line with existing guidance to schools for lodging maintenance monies with the local authority**

**Decision**

**Forum unanimously agreed the change of wording.**

1. **Review Future Meeting Plan**

* Agree Meeting Dates for next Academic Year

**Decision**

**Forum agreed the meeting dates going forward.**

1. **Mental Health Re-design**

Forum has looked briefly at this subject at various times. A contribution is made to CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services). This comes from the High Needs Block and amounts to around £4m.

Rebecca Hulme (Associate Director Children’s Services and CCG) is the lead for this work. Her team includes Kelly Semper and Rebecca Mann. Officers explained that the re-design is a very strategic and high level piece of work.

Rebecca and Kelly presented a PowerPoint presentation to Forum detailing the work that is taking place.. The presentation can be viewed on the Schools Forum page of the Norfolk Schools website. Click on link below to access the presentation:

<https://www.schools.norfolk.gov.uk/school-finance/norfolk-schools-forum/forum-agendas-and-papers>

Comments:

* The One Norfolk/Number is the focus of the Headteacher briefing on 23 March 2021.
* Thrive (not the Thrive School based model) applies to all ages and reflects what young people have told us – they initially want support from family and friends and we need to support these people. We do not want to miss opportunities to help people.
* Members said Headteacher Briefings would be a good way of getting the mental health re-design message across.
* Officers said that this is an exciting time and could result in a cutting edge service.
* Members said this sounds very positive – concerns that mental health support team will only have 60% coverage.

*Officers understand that government wants to get to 100% coverage by 2025.*

* Members highlighted that lots of staff have up skilled themselves during the pandemic and we need to respect what schools have been able to provide but have to understand their capacity.

*Officers said they want to thank education colleagues for the role they play.*

* There are 228 Schools that have at least one mental health champion and how this is promoted is very important; if anyone would like to find out more about this and the training to become a champion, then there is an email address on slide 8 of the presentation.

The Chair thanked everyone involved with the presentation.

1. **AOB**

It was highlighted by a member that there is a consultation on National Funding Formula on Sparsity and based on road journeys.

Officers will be responding to this consultation and think this would be an advantage for Norfolk.

1. **Date of next meeting**

14 May 2021 09:00 – 12:00