**Norfolk Schools Forum**

**Minutes of Meeting held on Friday 9 July 2021**

**09:00 – 11:30 hours**

**Teams Meeting**

**Present: Representing**

Andrew Aalders-Dunthorne Academies

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

Bob Groome Association of Teachers & Lecturers

Glyn Hambling, Unity Education Trust Alternative Provision

Howard Nelson, Diocese of Norwich Diocesan Board of Education

Carol Jacques Maintained Nursery School

Clare Jones, Boudica Schools Trust Academies

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

Michael Bateman Assistant Director, SEND Strategic Improvement & Early Effectiveness

Martin Brock Accountant, Schools, SEN and Early Years

Marilyn Edgeley Admin Officer

Dawn Filtness Finance Business Partner

Alison Randall Head of Finance, Leadership & Governance Services

Nicki Rider Interim Head of High Needs SEND

Chris Snudden Director of Learning & Inclusion

**Apologies:**

John Crowley Assistant Director Learning and

Achievement

Sally Cutting Senior Accountant

Seb Gasse Assistant Director Education Strategy & Infrastructure

Sara Tough Executive Director Childrens Services

Vicky Warnes JCC (primary phase)

1. **Apologies**

Apologies were received from John Crowley, Sally Cutting and Seb Gasse, Vicky Warnes had not been able to access the meeting via the join link and subsequently sent her apologies.

The Chair welcomed the new Maintained Special School representative Rebecca Wicks and the new Academy representative Adrian Ball.

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.**

A letter to be sent to School Forums in the Eastern Region has been drafted and included in the meeting papers. Members agreed this was an excellent, well put together draft and that the letter should now be emailed to the other Forums for their views on the content..

**Action: Draft letter to be sent to Eastern region Forums.**

Letter to the Secretary of State jointly from the current Chair and previous Chair of Forum and the reply from John Edwards, Education and Funding Skills Agency is included in the meeting papers for information.

* **Re-circulate Management Information Sheet regarding spend on disabled staff criteria**

It was confirmed a management information sheet will go out to schools today with information from Carole Human on how to access all dedelegated pots of funding and what they can be used for.

* **Review of demographic changes in Norfolk**

Due to illness It was agreed this item will be moved to a future meeting when the relevant member of staff will be available to provide an update.

**Action: add to agenda of next meeting.**

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

**3a. Discuss proposals to include in Fair Funding Consultation (verbal update)**

Officers confirmed that no information has yet been received from the Department of Education (DfE). Information on next years funding arrangements is usually released sometime in July and once that happens officers will plan what should be included in the consultation with schools.

Officers recently met with the DfE as part of the Eastern Regional Group meeting and there is a possibility that some indicative information will come through next week. It will be a local formula for 2022/23.We may receive some information on sparsity rates and also on high needs funding. There will be a consultation on a hard formula beyond that.

We will want to progress with the consultation document and options on transfer from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block (0.5% plus an option for an additional amount).

**Comments:**

* We could use opportunities such as Headteacher meetings to engage with schools on the importance of responding to the consultation.

**Action: Sarah Shirras will pass on the dates of these meetings to the chair of Schools Forum.**

* Members requested that a breakdown on type of establishments responding as happened last year is part of the process. Also remind people that giving their opinion is important.

3b. Update on Review of Special Schools’ Funding (verbal update)

Keith Bates explained that there is not much detail to report at present. The reason for the review is that Special School Funding levels have not changed for many years. Current funding of £10,000 per place is nationally set – we are focussing on the 5 top-up levels which have not changed since 2013. It is a complex task to obtain benchmarking data on funding and expenses. The group consists of LA Officers, Headteachers and School Business Managers. In due course reports will be brought to School Forum.

Officers added that this was indeed a complex piece of work. The group will also be looking at bandings and how to model for the future, agreeing staffing and leadership ratios within top-up bandings and looking at what processes other LA’s have in place.

**Comments:**

Glyn Hambling said benchmarking was essential and offered to help getting this information.

Members highlighted that Suffolk County Council are holding a review. Officers said this was a review on delivery of operational service and not on funding. Officers confirmed they have benchmarking information from Suffolk.

1. **How School Forum Meets in Future**

It is acknowledged that there have been some challenges with holding virtual meetings, a necessity during the pandemic. At the last meeting it was suggested that a discussion should be had at how Forum meets in the future.

There are still some Norfolk County Council (NCC) protocols on how we meet and we should model on social distancing.

The September meeting will go ahead as a virtual MS-Teams meeting so this vote is about the November meeting onwards. Furthermore we will be governed by any changing restrictions.

Three core options have been identified; an alternative combination could be considered. Pros and cons of each option are set out in the paper to help with the discussion:

* All meetings on-line
* All meetings in person
* Half on-line and half in person

A vote took place on the 3 options in the paper with the following result:

Half and half 15 (83%)

Face to face 2 (11%)

All on-line 1 (5%)

1. **Admissions Appeals Charges**

At the January 2020 Schools Forum meeting it was agreed that an Admissions Appeals Task and Finish group should be set up to review current arrangements. The group has met to review arrangements over the past year.

This paper is an update on work and provides information to enable members to come to a decision about future funding/charging arrangements and requires Forum to vote on the available options.

The group looked at cost of venues, transparency and costs, communication of the appeals process, charging of academies and free schools and the potential for DSG funding on admissions appeals.

The process has changed since the pandemic and appeals can take place by telephone, video conference or through a paper-based appeal, where all parties can make representation in writing. This has reduced the charge to £150 per appeal.

From October 2021 onwards, DfE guidance states that admission authorities should prepare appeals to be conducted in the normal way.

Accuracy

it should be noted in Option 2 in the paper that Foundation school read Community school

Also any arrangements should be for 2022/23 and not for 2021/22.

**Comments:**

Excellent report

* Bearing in mind there is a cost to that appeal, will the cost effect whether anyone would go to an appeal or not if they are not picking up that cost directly?
* Answer - Some people’s view may alter if the cost is changed. We have been working through how to communicate to parents the appeals process and the chances of success.
* I think cost would not have an impact more likely schools are considering the complexity to taking an extra student.
* Think we should continue to hold appeals virtually if we are able to.
* No guarantee that any money freed up by option 3 would go to schools.

Officers confirmed this money would not go directly to schools but would be used for learning and inclusion services. We are not going through this process for a budget saving. It is difficult to stipulate how any savings would be used until we know we have those savings.

The member who raised this issue that led to the working group being formed agreed this was not raised as a cost saving but as an equitable process issue.

She reported that a result of the work done by the group has led to a greater awareness among parents of the appeals process and a reduction in the amount of families challenging.

* I think before Forum can make an informed decision we should have an idea about the money would be reused.
* Often the schools that are oversubscribed are the better off schools so paying for this service is often not an issue. Probably fairer that the schools that use the service pay for it. Therefore I think option 2 is a good option.
* Officers confirmed that they would discuss any changes in the estimate of the costs of appeals with Schools Forum. At the end of the year the different blocks off set each other within the DSG budget.
* Greater consultation with schools before a decision is made.

The Chair clarified the position that Forum requires information on how Norfolk County Council would use any savings that occurred from a change in the charging process. It was agreed however to hold an indicative vote to see what further work officers need to do.

**Option 1 – Continue with current arrangements. DSG is not used for admissions appeals. NCC budget covers the appeals charges for maintained schools. Academies and Free Schools are charged for their appeals.**

No 12 (70%)

Yes 3 (17%)

Abstain 2 (11%)

**Based on the response (no to continuation of current arrangements), which of the following options within the paper should be implemented?**

* **Option 2** – Charge appeals costs to all schools that are their own admissions authority. This includes Academies, Free Schools, Voluntary Aided, and Foundation schools. NCC budget would cover the appeals charges for Voluntary Controlled and Community schools.
* **Option 3** - Funding for appeals can be delegated to all schools and academies (i.e. agreed as already delegated within the funding formula to schools via DSG Schools Block). All schools and academies would then be charged for admissions appeals.
* **Option 4** - Funding for appeals can be held centrally for all schools and academies. This may require a transfer from Schools Block to the Central Schools Services Block (effectively reducing funding to all schools by an estimated £1.50 per-pupil). No schools or academies would then need to be charged for admissions appeals as the central pot would pay for them.

Votes cast by Forum members:

Option 2 9 (56%)

Option 3 6 (37%)

Option 4 1 ( 6%)

**Going forward**

**Include option 2 in the autumn consultation and do not explore other options at this point.**

1. **Cyber Security – Potential risks to schools (Alison Randall)**

This report is to update the School’s Forum on the potential risk to schools and academies of the Cyber Security threat and to inform them of support available.

Officers said that NCC is looking at themed audits to carry out certification work and an audit will take place with 12 schools in the autumn and findings will be circulated to all schools.

**Comments:**

* Audits – can they be more desk based?
* Post 16 colleges have implemented password changes.
* What can School Forum do?.... Promote awareness.
* Promote the Norfolk approach with flyers.

There are links at the bottom of the report on how to access NCC resources

**Action: Alison Randall will talk to IT about classroom flyers.**

**Forum noted the information provided.**

1. **Review Future Meeting Plan**

* Next meeting – Consultation to include Admissions Appeals
* Early Years – maintained nursery supplement, a hint this may be looked at
* High Needs – We may have information on new arrangements.
* Report on Special Schools’ Funding Review.
* Look at transfer to High Needs Block once we have DSG figures and discuss disapplication request.

1. **Elections**

Chris Caddamy’s term of office will be up in august. The Deputy Principals of Post 16 providers will decide if they are happy for Chris to continue or if they wish to nominate someone else.

1. **Date of next meeting**

29 September 2021 09:00 – 11:30