**Norfolk Schools Forum**

**Minutes of Meeting held on Friday 22 November 2019**

**09:00 – 12:00 hours**

**South Green Park Mattishall**

**Present: Representing:**

Andrew Aalders-Dunthorne (Sub) Academies

Keith Bates, Eaton Hall Specialist Academy Special School Academy

Holly Bowman Nursery Schools

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

Carol Dallas, Taverham High School Secondary Academies

Alan Evans Academies

Mike Grimble, Avenue Junior School Primary Governors

Glyn Hambling Alternative Provision

Tim Hillman (sub) JCC (Secondary phase)

Clare Jones Academies

Howard Nelson Diocesan Board of Education

Peter Pazitka Academies

Stephen Plume (substitute for Ian Clayton) Academies

Sarah Porter (substitute for Christina Kenna) Academies

Sarah Shirras, (Chair) St Williams Primary Primary Schools

Sarah Young (substitute for Fyfe Johnston) Maintained Special Schools

Joanna Tuttle Maintained Secondary

Vicky Warnes JCC (primary phase)

Martin White Primary Governors

Michael Bateman Head of Education HN SEND

Service

Martin Brock Accountant

Sally Cutting Senior Accountant

Marilyn Edgeley Admin Officer

Dawn Filtness Finance Business Partner

Alison Randall Head of Finance, Leadership & Governance Services (Educator Solutions)

Chris Snudden Assistant Director (Education)

**Apologies:**

Ian Clayton Academies

Bob Groome JCC

Fyfe Johnston Maintained Special Schools

Christina Kenna Academies

Joanne Philpott Academies

Sara Tough Executive Director Childrens Services

**1. Welcome**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting

**2. Minutes of last meeting and Matters Arising**

**T**he minutes of the meeting held on 11 September were accepted as a true record.

**PE and Pupil Premium Grant**

School Forum queried why maintained schools have been asked to account for PE and Pupil Premium Grant spend by Educator Solutions at the end of the financial year. Schools felt this was an additional piece of work and was not successful as some of them had not done it anyway. Therefore it has been agreed that it will be an essential document in the carry forward in the end of year analysis of balances.

**Fraud Mitigation**

Single payments of over £10,000 – an additional check will be carried out by a member of the School’s Finance & Business Services Team.

It was confirmed that the secondary school will be exempt from this extra check.

**Pupil Place Planning**

The Education Strategy and Infrastructure – Developing Norfolk’s Education Landscape Cabinet paper is included in the meeting papers.  This gives a sense of growth plans and impending strategies.

Officers said that there needs to be a shift in schools to join established federations and not start new ones, the same applies to MATs.

Officers confirmed that they are visiting schools not part of the BMP scheme to discuss contingency plans for property maintenance.

Any costs that fall to the authority will have to be repaid by schools

Also included in the papers the secondary and primary DfE dashboard document – these are benchmarked against other authorities.  These two documents show the authorities forecasting to be very accurate on primary. Secondary phase is very accurate on 1 year forecasting not so accurate on 3 year, which is harder to forecast.

**Admission Appeal Costs**

This was raised by Jo Philpott at the last meeting and will be deferred to 10 January meeting.

**3. Catering Contract**

Paper presented by Alison Randall.

This report, the same as previous years, will be presented to Cabinet with minor amendments.

The Authority is duty bound to ensure that all maintained schools have provision to provide school meals. A group contract is agreed and schools are free to opt in or out via a service level agreement. The contract is monitored for quality by a catering board made up of Headteachers, Governors, Norse and the Authority. The contract runs for 3 years, there is a change this year in that Norse are offering a profit share scheme.

Schools Forum noted the information provided.

**4. SEND Transformation**

Paper presented by Michael Bateman.

This is a 5 year recovery plan modelled on certain facts and assumptions – most of the questions will arise in the Fair Funding item on the agenda.

Work Streams on pages 15/16 of the report:

Work Stream 1 – this is critical in helping schools to meet SEN needs.

Some schools are assisting with moderating and others with work we are doing with Oxfordshire and Hertfordshire authorities.

Work Stream 3 – Infrastructure

The Authority is on target with capital development and in a position to move forward.

The School in Gt Yarmouth specialising in social, emotional and mental health difficulties now has a sponsor and planning has been submitted.

Other sponsors have visited the site for the ASD school in Fakenham.

The timeline for the 170 place Norwich area school is less clear as it is dependent on a Department of Education timeline.

Specialist Resource Bases – NPS are looking at a design briefing.

Current Special School expansions are in line with our expectations.

There is an on-going increase in the High Needs Budget but this is slowing, however, there is a 198 increase in places from the last reporting period.

The transformation is continuing in line with the programme with specialist provision planned for September 2020 and further Specialist Resource Base provision.

It was confirmed that all academy led special schools are state maintained and as such will follow the normal admissions policies.

Members asked if a cumulative deficit of £18.4m for next part of the programme will have to be repaid by the Authority?

Officers said that at the present time this is unclear due to the recent consultation on the grant conditions of the DSG.  If the proposed revised conditions are enacted, the view is that this will be ring-fenced and treated separately from other LA funding.  It is expected that this will need to be repaid in the future and will, therefore, be a liability on the Dedicated Schools Grant in the meantime.  The Authority is due to have a visit from the DfE in the near future when this may be clarified.

The transformation plan has been remodelled to show the one-off additional £10m HNB funding confirmed for 2020/21, and presumes that this will be the new base level funding going forward until confirmation from the DfE is received

Members acknowledged how tribunals and EHCPs can affect the projections in the transformation programme.

Officers reminded members that right from the start the ambition of the LA has been re-organisation of resources and not to significantly increase special school places with the majority of pupils catered for in mainstream schools and to make sure current high cost independent special school places are focused in the future on good and outstanding state funded special school sector in Norfolk.

**Action**

**Officers agreed to provide information showing how places have increased in Special Schools and increase in rate of referrals compared to current capacity.**

**5. De-delegation of Central Services**

Paper presented by Martin Brock.

The difference in this report from last year is that special schools and nursery schools have been added in for buyback of services, as de-delegation is not allowed for them.

**Staff costs**

The ratio is the same as previous years but will have to be looked at in the future for 2021/22.

**Decision**

**Primary: Yes**

**Secondary: No**

**Contingencies**

There was no significant call on this fund last year.

Members highlighted the fact that the surplus will go back into general funding even though it was taken out of maintained primary school funding.

**Decision**

**Forum decision was not to de-delegate contingencies for the primary sector.**

**Free School Meal Checking Service**

**Decision**

**Primary: Yes**

**Secondary: Yes**

**Special Schools buyback**

**Decision**

**Special Schools: Should be the same as last year, Sarah Young will confirm to Martin Brock.**

**Special Schools Academies buyback**

**Decision**

**Special Academies: Keith Bates to confirm to Martin Brock**

**Nursery School buyback**

**Decision**

**Yes for all 3 nursery schools**

**Growth**

**Decision**

**For: 14**

**Against: 2**

**Absentions:2**

**Central Services**

**Decision**

**For: unanimous**

**Historic commitments**

**Decision**

**For: unanimous**

**Items retained from central services**

**Decision**

**For: unanimous**

Members raised the issue of Long Stratton Sports Hall and the continued financial impact upon the DSG. This was a 25year lease however the council has managed to reduce this to a commitment by the Authority to 3 years.

The Authority will have further discussions to try to reduce this further.

**6. Fair Funding Consultation**

Paper presented by Dawn Filtness.

Officers understand that there is a general sensitivity around the transfer of funding from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block and the Authority is keen for comments as well as a formal vote on moving 0.5% from the Schools Block to the High Needs block.

Proposed changes to the distribution formula of the Schools Block and the DSG.

Norfolk proposes to continue moving schools towards full implementation of the DfE’s National Funding Formula unit values, using a Minimum Funding Guarantee of +1.84% as well as a funding cap.

**High Needs Block**

There is extra funding for 1 year confirmed by the DfE. However, at this stage, the DfE have not confirmed that this additional funding will form part of the base on an ongoing basis. For the purposes of planning, the LA has assumed that the funding will be ongoing until informed to the contrary.

Members were reminded that the SEND recovery plan is about the re-balancing of funding and that the Council has invested £120m capital and expects to see benefits of that investment.

The expectation is that the DSG will be back in balance within 3 years and the principle around option 1 is good financial planning.

The majority of schools voted for Option 3 with Options 1 and 2 having about equal amounts of the remaining votes.

The LA will need to make a strong case that Government funding for High Needs is not sufficient.

If the request of a block transfer of 0.5% is not agreed today the LA will submit a disapplication request to the Secretary of State for this transfer.

Members commented on the uncertainties in the long–term and the reduction of the timeline of 5 years down to 3 years of the transformation plan.

Officers said that the extra funding should enable the deficit to be repaid in 3 years as originally expected by the DfE.

Members understood the on-going issues but said that this needs to be communicated to schools.

Officers said that if the LA did not submit the disapplication request it could portray the view to Central Government the extra funding will solve the High Needs crisis.

There is also the question of the repayment of the council investment and maintaining the confidence around this.

Members asked for clarification in future consultations on the type of schools that responded under the category of ‘other..

Members pointed out that the table on page 7 shows the 0.5% in for every year and it appears as though School Forum have agreed to this before making their decision.

**Members Comments:**

* Understand responses supporting option 3.
* We are in the position that we understand the challenges and why the extra 0.5% might have to be agreed but recommend either we say School Forum does not agree option 1 or that it must be reduced going forward.
* Understand the difficulty but recommend option 3.
* Impacts on moving money greater on schools than on the Authority.
* Schools concerned about present situation and struggling.
* Speaking to academy trusts understand need for 0.5% but pressure on school budgets and High Needs children it is like ‘robbing Peter to pay Paul’.
* No financial difference for us so happy for option 1 but option 3 came out of consultation.
* See both sides - our members in schools need more effective provision but schools are having to make redundancies so foot in both camps we will abstain (Union School Forum members) as we need to support our members.
* I am committed to SEND transformation plan but understand the pressures on schools and I represent 3 governing bodies.
* Consultation going for option 3 – concerned about picture in 4 years’ time.
* Will support 0.5% but additional transfer it is not our decision & is for LA to decide.
* Difficult position - general elections etc. and don’t know if the £10m is permanent – our school went for option 2.
* Disappointed with consultation - schools not getting bigger picture.
* Small schools gain most with option 3 and don’t figure in landscape long term.
* We have to get this solved – compromise option 2.
* Special Schools Academy rep - will go for option 1 as it is an invest to save.
* As a sub I need to reflect views of sector would have been helpful to have had responses broken down by sectors.
* Could have been more effort into selling the consultation.
* As a trust with small schools going for option 3.
* Option 2 as mixed schools.
* Hard with impact on Headteachers.
* Councillors have been pressured by voters.
* Not sure about the extra funding and continued drive on SEND transformation and how we get message out that this has a chance of succeeding going for option 2.
* Can’t help thinking something missed in consultation don’t want programme dislodged will go for option 2.
* There needs to be transparency not just larger picture but also how transformation can help schools.
* This may change profile of voting.
* Long term demand around SEN will not go away and we will need to re-visit in future years I will go for middle ground option 2.
* Support SEN transformation however see pain in school budgets schools need to know when they will see benefits – option 2.
* Most people saying option 2 – middle ground seeing both sides.
* If we go for option 2 need to say why we did not go for other options.
* If we say no – saying not our problem.
* It is saying too many conflicts.
* We are not saying LA problem but saying we want best for our children.
* I am voting for the LA option that will benefit Norfolk children.
* More schools need to respond to the consultation.
* Also need to say what schools made up the responses.
* Need to unpick the data and to have it for feedback next time.
* Lack of responses could be because they think it’s a done deal (going against – option 3) so need to say why.

Martin Brock confirmed the breakdown of the responses:

Responses (other)

1 engage trust

1 Right for Success

1 DNEAT

1 St Benet’s MAT

Litcham school – all through

St John Baptist Catholic MAT

Diocese of Norwich

**Vote on continuation of the movement of 0.5% from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block.**

**For 14**

**Against 3**

**Abstain 2**

Members were not required to vote for or against the request for a further £2.5m transfer (as per the LA’s revised DSG recovery plan), although they recognise that they have a shared responsibility to try to resolve the High Needs crisis.

Members wanted a statement to be issued from the chair of Forum stating that they had, with great difficulty, come to the view that option 2 was the best way forward.

**Action**

**The chair will take 3 or 4 points from each member and compile a statement that will be issued to the Department for Education, and Norfolk schools and academies.**

**7. AOB**

It was agreed the March meeting will move from 13 March to 18 March 2020.

**9. Date of next meeting**

10 January 2020 9am-12pm – South Green Park Mattishall