

Norfolk Schools Forum

Minutes of Meeting held on Friday 15 March 2019
09:00 – 11:15 hours
South Green Park Mattishall

Present:

Keith Bates, Eaton Hall Specialist Academy
Chris Caddamy, (Vice Chair) City College
Ian Clayton
Carol Dallas, Taverham High School
Alan Evans
Mike Grimble, Avenue Junior School
Bob Groome
Carole Jaques (substitute for Holly Bowman)
Clare Jones
Howard Nelson
Peter Patizka
Joanne Philpott
Sarah Porter (substitute for Christina Kenna)
Sarah Shirras, (Chair) St Williams Primary
Joanna Tuttle
Vicky Warnes
Martin White
Michael Bateman

Martin Brock
Sally Cutting
Marilyn Edgeley
Dawn Filtness
Chris Snudden

Apologies:

John Banbury
Holly Bowman
Fyfe Johnston
Christina Kenna
Sara Tough

Representing

Special School Academy
16 – 19 Representative
Academies
Secondary Academies
Academies
Primary Governors
JCC
Nursery School
Academies
Diocesan Board of Education
Academies
Academies
Academies
Primary Schools
Maintained Secondary
JCC (primary phase)
Primary Governors
Head of Education HN SEND
Service
Accountant
Senior Accountant
Admin Officer
Finance Business Partner
Assistant Director (Education)

Early Years
Nursery Schools
Maintained Special Schools
Academies
Executive Director Childrens
Services

1. Welcome

The Chair welcomed new members:

Ian Clayton – Academies
Peter Pazitka – Academies
Joanne Philpott – Academies
Glyn Hambling – Alternative Provision

The Chair explained that it was important that members represent their whole peer group and not individual institutions. Members must send substitutes if they are unable to attend a meeting. Anyone sent as a substitute needs to understand the way Schools Forum operates.

Sally Cutting will hold induction sessions for new members and designated substitutes and is the key contact for any questions members may have on subjects discussed at Forum.

2. Minutes of Last Meeting

The minutes were accepted.

3. Matters Arising

Staff Costs

At the last meeting members asked for clarification on who meets the costs of redundancy when a school has a red RAG rating.

Members were concerned that there is a financial advantage to a school getting a red RAG rating.

The annual increment was not clear – this is built into planners, schools should ask their Finance Support Officers if they want clarification.

Chris Snudden, Sally Cutting and Sarah Shirras will meet to discuss this issue with Carole Human HR Business Partner on 2 April 2019.

Support Staff Pay Increases

A communication was sent out during the autumn term to schools.

Sports Grant

No further information to date however an announcement is due.

Pupil Variance

Effect of Pupil Variations circulated.

Budget figures were not available at the last meeting. There is a £1m difference due to pupil variation. Figures are based on using 5/12 of the October census and 7/12 of September figures. Attleborough was an incorrect entry and has been removed.

Comments:

Free Schools could be a cost to the system if places are unfilled in other schools.

Officers replied that this is paid for out of the built-in growth factor.

Based on estimates there is a clawback system if it has been agreed with the school and is for a significant number of pupils.

Members suggested there should be a percentage of change in the future and that this needs to be specific.

Members suggested that if we are processing retrospective pupil variations to update the estimated numbers of one particular school, then we should look at doing this for all schools so that there is a consistent approach”

Options to be modelled for 2020/21 and brought back to forum for discussion.

Action: Jane Blackwell to be asked to attend meeting in May to provide more detail and state how much funding is given for growth

Action: Martin Brock to discuss with the Pupil planning team and bring back options to next meeting.

4. Dedicated Schools Grant Recovery Plan

Officers explained Norfolk has been asked to take part in a trial and complete the DfE Recovery Plan template (document tabled).

The government require the Deficit Recovery Plan and Year end Accounts approved by Schools Forum.

The High Needs Recovery Plan is in place and Council agreed last October £120m of capital borrowing as part of a wide-ranging SEND Transformation Programme. This is funding for new buildings and to work with maintained schools to adapt existing buildings.

The authority will build up to 4 special schools 3 of which are planned.

There will be more targeted information to forum on a regular basis.

The HN Recovery Plan will consist of 5 work streams:

- SEN Support
- Education Plan Performance
- Infrastructure
- Alternative Provision
- Financial Recovery – Sarah Shirras will join this work stream

The recovery Plan will be over a 3 – 5-year period.

Norfolk has been successful in a Special Free school bid for £17m towards the programme.

School Forum members asked why this paper was tabled not giving members adequate time to consider the issues. Officers had only received the template to work on from the DfE the week prior to the meeting – members were given time to read through the paper prior to forming an opinion on the contents.

Comments:

The plan does not cover all the savings that need to be made and as it only shows 3 years, does not show the recovery.

Officers said that this was in the Committee papers and a link to these could be added to agenda and papers, as they are a helpful source of information.

Officers reported that a judicial review has been logged to the government's approach to funding of High Needs and if found unlawful there could be a national review of the SEN funding system

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The chair summarised the feelings of the meeting saying it was hard to make decisions without papers in advance of the meeting.

Comments:

The template needs to identify give a more detailed summary of the pressures and how the money is spent.

Reflect on-going pressures more.

Need to know how pressures are arrived at.

Not a long enough plan, needs to have 5 years and needs to have the assumptions attached.

More information on savings and methods implemented over the next three years.

Forum said it would be helpful for the authority to have feedback from members on impact in schools.

Summary of points School Forum asked to be taken into consideration in relation to the DSG recovery plan:

The DSG recovery plan needs to recover the position more quickly

The DSG recovery plan needs to consider the impact on school budgets

Needs more detail in each category of what the pressures are

They want to see the full 5-year recovery plan – not 3 years

3 years doesn't show the full picture

Need full costs and places

Need a detailed recovery plan in advance of the next meeting and a detailed background paper to assist new members on the current financial position.

Action

- **Link to committee papers included with agenda and papers**
- **A detailed plan in advance of the May meeting circulated to School Forum members**
- **A reduced agenda to give more time for discussions on the Recovery Plan.**

5. Nursery School

At the last meeting a discussion took place as to whether the authority should continue to give the three nursery schools top-up funding to the level that was agreed in 2017/18. Funding from the DfE had decreased following the introduction of the Early Years National Funding Formula. The authority has taken the decision to continue with protection and will send written confirmation to the three Nursery schools.

Carole Jaques representing nursery schools said that they appreciated the decision taken.

6. Increase to school meal prices for NCC Group Catering Contract

It was noted that there is a presumption at the beginning of this paper that Schools Forum had accepted the reasons for the increase in prices before the item was discussed.

Norse Catering are proposing to increase the price of school meals for those schools in the NCC Group Catering Contract, due to the ongoing impact of the National Living Wage on the cost of providing school meals and the impact in the rise of the cost of food.

Currently the cost is £2.20 per meal and it is proposed this will rise to £2.30.

There will be an increase of 15p + VAT for adult meals.

Decision

Schools Forum noted the information provided and the reasons for the rise in the price of school meals.

7. Maintained Special Schools – buy back services

At the last meeting maintained schools voted on de-delegation of central services. This option does not apply to Special Schools, so a decision is required by the Special Schools representative

Maintained Special Schools are allowed to buy back into the same services and last year voted to buy back into all services apart from contingencies and behaviour support.

In the absence of any representative from maintained Special Schools being present the decision is deferred.

This highlights the need for Forum Members to send substitutes if they are unable to attend a meeting.

Action

It was agreed that Martin Brock will email the Special School representative for a decision on buy back of central services.

Individual organisations are asked to give a list to Marilyn Edgeley of designated substitutes that can be asked to step in if a member is unable to attend a meeting. It was suggested substitutes could attend a meeting to observe before acting as substitutes. It will be up to organisations to vote in suitable colleagues to act as substitutes.

8. Themed Audits

The purpose of this paper is to raise the awareness of themed audits. Norfolk Audit Services (NAS) as the County Council's internal auditors, carry out an annual programme of themed audits, visiting a representative sample of schools. There is a link in the paper to the latest themed audit.

Schools Forum noted the information provided.

9. Any Other Business

It was highlighted that from September, schools' contributions to teacher pension costs are going up from 16% to 23%. The grant to cover this is only promised for one year so far so could have a massive impact on schools. LA schools have been asked to prepare 2 budgets, one with and one without this grant in it in the longer term.

Comment made that it is important the Government understand the pressures school budgets are under and that it will become intolerable for schools to maintain sustainability if the grant does not continue.

Action

- **Standardised letter to MP's highlighting the issue that if the grant does not continue schools could become unsustainable.**

10. Dates of Meetings

Friday 10 May 2019 – 9am-12pm – South Green Park Mattishall

