

Norfolk Schools Forum

Minutes of Meeting held on Friday 18 May 2018

09:00 - 12:00 hours

South Green Park Mattishall

Present:

Keith Bates, Eaton Hall Specialist Academy
Holly Bowman
Chris Caddamy, City College
Sally Cutting
Carol Dallas, Taverham High School
David Hicks
Mike Grimble, Avenue Junior School
Bob Groome
Fyfe Johnston, Clare School
Alex Robinson, Millfield Primary School
Sarah Shirras, (Chair) St Williams Primary
Chris Snudden
Vicky Warnes
Sandra Govender
John Banbury
Martin Brock
Marilyn Edgeley
Clare Jones
Mark Adamson
Ashley Best-White
Christine McKenna (substitute attended)
Michael Bateman
John Crowley

Representing

Special School Academy
Nursery Schools
(sub) 16 – 19 Representative
NCC
Academies
EMAT (substitute for Alan Evans)
Primary Governors
JCC (Secondary phase)
Special Schools
Primary Governors
Primary Schools
Assistant Director (Education)
JCC (primary phase)
Engage Trust
Early Years
NCC Finance
Admin Officer (Minutes)
Academies
Academies
Primary
Academies
NCC
NCC

Apologies

Alison Clarke, Robert Kett Primary (sub) NPHA

1. Welcome

Congratulations were given to Bruce, Sally and Martin on their new roles.

It was agreed a letter would be sent from Chair of Schools Forum thanking Bruce Connors for all his work and congratulating him on his new role as Senior Programme Accountant.

2. Minutes of Last Meeting

Accepted with minor corrections.

3. Matters Arising

Draft minutes to be circulated before being published.

4. School Forum Membership

We have two new members representing academies, Clare Jones and Mark Adamson.

The number of maintained school representatives has been reduced to four, to reflect the pupil population in Norfolk. There needs to be an election for all primary members and the numbers need to reduce as discussed at the last forum meeting.

Alex Robinson (primary governor) is happy to stand as a secondary governor candidate, we have had an additional nominee, so an election is required.

Ballot papers will be sent to all the maintained secondary schools.

4a. Maintained Nursery Schools

There was a large reduction in 2017/18 to maintained nursery grants, the grant is to cover the higher running costs that nursery schools experience opposed to other early years settings.

Proposal

To provide protection for the financial years 2017/18, 2018/19 and 2019/20 to the Maintained Nursery Schools. To protect their fixed sums at 2016/17 funding levels, with a 1.5% minimum funding guarantee each year, and this will be funded from the Early Years Block contingency. This will give the same financial protection to Nursery Schools that our special schools and mainstream schools currently receive. It is not good financial practice to allow a school budget to experience such a large year on year drop in funding.

Comments

- There should be an explanation/clarify around the figures, and time to communicate with other heads. In principal appreciative of support.
- Looking to smooth impact over 3-year period. Is there any evidence that these settings are better than those with lower running costs?
- Will there be negative impact for other 3 & 4-year-old settings?
- Will numbers be adjusted each July?

Decision

Forum agreed this proposal on a 2 years basis with the proviso that this will be reviewed next year

Action (Marilyn to add to Year List for setting 2019/20 budgets).

5. Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG)

Every year a final outturn is produced. Sally Cutting outlined the different Dedicated Schools Grant blocks:

- High Needs Block: £10.5 million overspent
- Early Years: underspent by £3.5m
- Schools block: £1.5m underspend

Overall there was a £5.5m overspend on DSG, which was offset against reserves – school balance.

Forum considered the content of this report.

Action

The underspend on the schools block was mostly due to favourable rates revaluations. Martin Brock to speak to Bob Groom to explain the causes of changes in rateable values.

6. Planned Growth

A paper was presented for information only. Each year finance works with admissions to plan the schools budget requirements. In previous years we had to contact the Secretary of State for growth in schools, but for 2018-19 this is not required instead the finance team are required to present the information to Schools Forum.

Comments

If a Free School is opened – if there is no need for this school does this make surplus places in other school?

If it is not LA led and the demand is not there it was confirmed that this will take pupils (and funding) from other schools.

7. High Needs Budget and Places

Details of the High Needs Block budget and the places being commissioned was circulated. This does not include the number of Alternative Provision places from September, there is a review of commissioning in this area. Non-maintained special schools are causing a considerable amount of pressure due to a shortage of maintained special schools' places and parental preference.

There is a direct correlation between this and the LAC budgets, so some funding is related to LAC where there has been an increase. There is a new directive looking at how to bring more of these pupils back into Norfolk.

8. Changes to SEN top-up funding

Action

Chris Caddamy agreed to share with Steph Askew results of work done with primary schools use of the notional fund.

9. Updated Scheme for Financing Schools

Norfolk has a local scheme and any changes to this must be agreed with Schools Forum whereas national updates only need to be communicated to Forum.

National changes – as described in meeting papers page 21

Directed Revision – Loans,

Changes in balances of closing schools

Responsibility for redundancy and early retirement costs update

Decision

It was agreed that redundancy and early retirement costs will go to the National Funding Working Group and then if the group felt it was relevant included in the Fair Funding Consultation.

We will ask the HR Business Partner to attend.

10. Treatment on school balances upon conversion

Updated guidance was published by the Department of Education in March 2018 relating to the treatment of surplus and deficit balances when a school becomes an Academy. Where a school converts to Academy with a deficit it is now the responsibility of the Local Authority to pick this up. Previously this has been done using the contingency, but Schools Forum have voted against this. It was originally intended to make a call on school budgets before setting them the following financial year, but this is not now allowed.

Decision

It was agreed to revisit looking at contingency when de-delegation is decided with a decision in the Autumn.

11. Minutes of Meetings of sub-groups of Schools Forum

Minutes of National Funding Working Group held on 26th April 2018.

Norfolk as a Local Authority is being funded to the new formula, and currently has an extra £8 million allocated on the existing formula. We need to work consider how to move to the new formula and how to lessen the impact on schools.

12. Communication

13. AOB

Draft Minutes of School Forum Meetings

It was agreed that draft minutes will be published on the website following meeting – it was agreed these will be circulated to members prior to publication.

Mike Grimble highlighted that the House of Commons Education Committee Schools and Colleges funding enquiry have asked for written submissions and asked if School Forum wanted to get involved.

14. Date of Next Meetings

School Forum

12 September 2018 09:00 – 12:00 hours

South Green Enterprise Centre Mattishall

National Funding Formula Working Group

14 June 2018 14:00 – 15:30

St Williams Way Primary School