

CAMBRIDGESHIRE SCHOOLS FORUM: MINUTES

Date: Friday 9 March 2018

Time: 10.00-11.35am

Place: Kreis Viersen Room, Shire Hall, Cambridge

Present: P Hodgson (Chairman), Dr A Rodger (Vice Chairman), L Calow, S Connell, T Davies, J Digby, A Matthews, J North, D Parfitt, A Reeder, A Tempny, S Tinsley and R Waldau (until 11.20am)

Observers

J Duveen	Teachers' Union (substituting for G Fewtrell)
N Hills	C of E Diocese of Ely (substituting for S Conant)
Councillor S Bywater	Cambridgeshire County Council
Councillor P Downes	Cambridgeshire County Council
Councillor J Whitehead	Cambridgeshire County Council

Officers

J Lewis, J Lee, M Wade, Dr H Phelan and R Greenhill (Clerk)

Apologies: Forum Members: S Blyth and M Woods
Observers: S Conant and G Fewtrell

40. MEMBERSHIP

The Chairman welcomed Angela Tempny, the Executive Headteacher for TBAP East, to her first meeting as the new Academy Alternative Provision representative. He also welcomed Jonathan Lewis to his first meeting since returning to the County Council as the new Service Director for Education.

41. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence and substitutions were noted as recorded above. There were no declarations of interest.

42. MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON 19 JANUARY 2018

The minutes of the meeting on 19 January 2018 were approved as an accurate record and signed by the Chairman.

43. ACTION LOG

The Action Log was reviewed and the following updates noted:

- i. Minute 24: Early Years National Funding Formula
With the Chairman's permission, an update was tabled showing the change in hourly rate received by providers between Autumn 2016 and autumn 2017 (copy attached at Appendix 1)
- ii. Minute 33: Cambridgeshire 2018/19 School Funding Formula

The Chair of the Cambridgeshire Secondary Heads (CSH) Group stated that the consultation on proposals to transfer funds from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block had been drawn to the attention of all secondary school headteachers by CSH and they had been encouraged to respond.

iii. Minute 35: De-Delegations 2018/19

Officers undertook to provide further information on the Data Protection Manager role and how it was anticipated that this would be discharged.

(**Action:** Head of Schools Intervention Service)

44. CAMBRIDGESHIRE SCHOOL FUNDING FORMULA 2018/19

The Head of Integrated Finance reported that the Schools Forum had agreed on 19 January 2018 to hold a working group to try to establish an agreed collective position on key issues for schools funding in Cambridgeshire. The Chairman had invited all members of the Schools Forum and Observers to contribute and attend. Preparatory work was co-ordinated by the Vice Chairman and the Working Group had met on 7 March 2018. The Dedicated Schools Budget (DSG), High Needs Budget and Early Years Budget had been identified as key areas and discussion had focused on identifying what was currently working well in these areas, the key challenges faced and what positive changes should be sought to improve the situation in Cambridgeshire in the short and medium term. More work was required to distil this further and address key issues such as the need to fund inflationary pressures; concerns about the impact on the viability of small schools, particularly those in rural areas; how the Department for Education (DfE) was planning to handle growth going forward; whether work should be carried out to create an evidence base for the cost of funding a school by need; the impact of the extended entitlement to free childcare on maintained and independent nurseries; the impact of salary increases and recruitment and retention issues; the general inflationary pressures on the High Needs Block and the need to ensure that children with additional needs received the right support.

The following comments arose in discussion of the report and the update provided by officers and in response to questions:

- Officers stated that the aspiration remained that the High Needs Block would stand alone in 2019/20 without a request for a top-up from the Schools Block. However, in practice a tapered transition to the introduction of the hard funding formula might be needed to manage the impact on schools and pupils. Should this be the case, members emphasised the importance of making clear to schools the impact which a decision not to top-up the High Needs Block would have on their individual budgets if centrally funded support was reduced;
- A member commented that it seemed unlikely that more funding for education would be forthcoming in advance of the next Comprehensive Spending Review. This made it even more important to maintain public awareness of the challenges which Cambridgeshire faced, including the disparity in per pupil funding from the Schools Block compared to similar local authorities;
- A member questioned the point at which a small school would become financially unviable under the funding formula. The Diocese of Ely Observer stated that around 70% of the schools in Cambridgeshire with less than 200 pupils were Church of England schools. If schools were funded at the median rate this would have a significant impact on the smallest of these schools, potentially reducing them from three classes across the primary age range to two;

- An Observer commented on the need for central Government to fund the policies which it introduced, for example the extended Early Years entitlement. The Service Director for Education commented that it would be useful to draw up a list of new unfunded burdens on schools and nurseries;
(**Action:** Head of Integrated Finance)
- An Early Years representative highlighted Early Years Special Educational Needs provision as a significant issue where practitioners would welcome more work;
- A member highlighted pressures relating to unfunded staffing costs;
- Members acknowledged the need to be clear about what changes would be needed to the National Funding Formula to meet the key challenges identified in Cambridgeshire;
- Members identified the Age Weighted Pupil Units (AWPU) and growth funding as valid area of focus;
- An elected Member Observer emphasised the importance of obtaining hard evidence of the particular pressures being experienced within Cambridgeshire to support any discussions with central Government. This should include the practicalities of delivering Government policies and the impact on both families and providers;
- The Service Director for Education highlighted the need to target those areas of specific relevance to Cambridgeshire where there was a realistic possibility of achieving a positive change;
- The Vice Chairman stated that the Working Group had produced a preliminary list of concerns, but this would need to be sharpened up and supporting evidence gathered before it was ready to be presented to local Members of Parliament and central Government. A twin track approach of engaging with the Department for Education at both officer level and formally through the Forum would be beneficial.

Summing up, the Chairman stated that there was a clear wish across the groups represented on the Cambridgeshire Schools Forum to take forward work to establish an agreed collective position on key issues for schools funding in Cambridgeshire. This would be used in discussions with both local Members of Parliament and at national level with the Department for Education (DfE). In order to complete this work before the summer Parliamentary Recess and in time to for in to be taken into account in the next central Government budget planning round it was proposed to hold a further working group meeting within the following two to three weeks comprising of a broadly representative cross-section of the Forum's membership and Observers. The Working Group's proposals would be shared informally with Forum members to inform its work and an additional public meeting of the Schools Forum would be arranged to formally discuss and agree the collective strategy going forward. Officers would liaise with officials at the DfE to establish current thinking and the timetable for the next round of budgetary proposals being formulated and this would inform decisions about the timing of sharing the Forum's agreed position with local Members of Parliament and Ministers.

A further meeting of the Schools Forum would be arranged for May/ June 2018 if the July meeting date was deemed too late to formally share views with the DfE.

It was resolved to:

- a) note and consider the update provided from the Working Group and consider any next steps or further work;
- b) hold a further Working Group meeting in the following two to three weeks consisting of the following representatives:

Philip Hodgson – Chairman
Dr Alan Rodger – Vice Chairman
Lucie Calow – Special School representative
Deborah Parfitt – Nurseries representative
Tony Davies – Primary School representative and Chair of Cambridgeshire Primary Heads Group
Stuart Tinsley – Secondary School representative
Andy Matthews – Primary School representative
Rikke Waldau – Nurseries representative
Councillor Peter Downes – Observer, Cambridgeshire County Council

- c) Hold further working group and public meetings as required.

45. EARLY YEARS NATIONAL FUNDING FORMULA REVIEW 2018/19: UPDATE

At the Chairman's discretion, the order of business was varied from the published agenda to accommodate officer attendance.

The Strategic Admissions Manager stated that the Department for Education had recently published the Early Years National Funding Formula rates for the 2018/19 year. This had confirmed that there would be no increase in baseline funding from the £4.42 received during 2017/18 and no changes in the operational guidance which would impact on the Cambridgeshire Funding Formula. This had been discussed with the Early Years Providers Reference Group. Funding for eligible two year olds would continue at £5.41 per hour with Early Years Pupil Premium paid at £0.53 per hour for eligible pupils and Disability Access Funding at £615 per year for eligible pupils. Settings would get additional top-up funding for pupils with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) with support also available to three and four year olds with additional needs prior to an EHCP being put in place through the new special educational needs Inclusion Fund (SENIF). It was estimated that there were currently 50 children in Early Years settings following an EHCP pathway who would receive this support. The final local funding formula would be considered by the Children and Young People Committee on 13 March 2018 and recommended implementation from April 2018 onward.

The following comments were noted in discussion of the report and in response to questions:

- The expertise offered by Addenbrookes Hospital led to a high number of families of children with very complex needs choosing to live in the local area. This impacted on the number of children with complex needs accessing education within Cambridgeshire. Officers stated that there was a health funding matrix for children with very high needs, but that there was scope for further refinement of this;

- An Early Years representative expressed concern that nurseries were no longer able to be fully inclusive for children with very complex needs because they could not guarantee their safety. There was a need to look holistically at the social and financial implications of not meeting children's additional needs within their Early Years settings and the long-term implications of this on primary and secondary schools and on families;
- An Early Years representative commented that it would be crucial to establish what the base rate of £4.04 per hour would actually fund;
- A member commented that the rationale for the Extended Entitlement appeared to be driven primarily by the wish to improve social mobility and economic opportunity for families rather than by an educational imperative. As such, representations on this might be better directed to the Treasury rather than to the Department for Education.

It was resolved to:

- a) note the contents of the report.

46. SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES SUFFICIENCY PROGRESS UPDATE

The Head of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Services and Principal Educational Psychologist stated that Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council had jointly commissioned an independent needs and sufficiency analysis of their SEND provision. This was considering what SEND need currently existed, where this were located within the county, where current SEND provision was located and how well this matched both current and future predictions of need. The findings would inform the SEND commissioning strategy and planning with schools and families for the next five years. The Service Director for Education highlighted the importance of getting engagement with stakeholders right before final recommendations were made. The final report would include both an executive summary of the findings and the full data included as appendices.

(Action: Head of SEND Services)

A secondary school representative noted that the attainment data for pupils placed in alternative provision was attributed to their parent schools, including at GCSE level, and that this was a significant consideration in commissioning places. Officers confirmed that this issue was recognised both within the work on SEND sufficiency and within the wider review of provision for pupils with social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs. Another secondary school representative commented that they would not expect secondary schools to put pupils with an Education, Health and Care Plan into alternative provision, but officers commented that the position was not always clear cut.

It was resolved to:

- a) note the progress of SEND Sufficiency work to date;
- b) agree that the findings of the analysis and implications of these for future planning be brought to the Schools Forum meeting in July 2018.

(Action: Democratic Services Officer)

47. UPDATE ON THE REVIEW OF PROVISION FOR PUPILS WITH SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL AND MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS

The Head of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Services and Principal Educational Psychologist stated that a graduated response was needed for those across the whole spectrum of social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs, from those showing preliminary indicators to those demonstrating significant need. Work was underway to clarify exactly what provision existed currently, including cross agency working.

The following points were raised in discussion of the report or in response to questions:

- An Early Years representative commented on the importance of identifying emerging needs in order to develop appropriate pathways for early intervention. Officers stated that the existence of speech and language needs or learning difficulties could lead to social, emotional and mental health needs if these were not identified and addressed early;
- An Observer noted the high cost of vacant funded places across the three SEMH schools and questioned why there were so many vacant places at a time of increasing demand for specialist SEMH support.

Officers stated that the places described had been commissioned 2017/18 and that not all of this provision met the needs of those requiring SEMH support or was in a geographically viable location for them to attend. The Service Director for Education stated that this aspect would be reviewed and more information provided.

(Action: Service Director: Education)

- An Observer commented that some of the tables in Section 10 of the report contained percentages rather than actual figures. Officers undertook to re-circulate the relevant tables with figures as well as percentages and to use this format in future reports;
(Action: Head of SEND Services)
- A Primary School representative commented that there were no primary places vacant at their local designated SEMH school and questioned whether this meant that the vacancies described were for secondary school aged pupils. Officers confirmed that this was the case and acknowledged that this raised a pertinent question about the provision needed;
- Officers confirmed that there was a recognised need for designated SEMH school provision for girls within the county;
- An Early Years representative asked whether any figures were available for the number of children on the SEMH pathway whose needs were attributed to early life experiences. Officers undertook to obtain numbers for children on the SEMH pathway with early social care involvement;
(Action: Head of SEND Services)
- Paragraph 5.21: An elected Member Observer expressed concern about the increase in home to school travel time for pupils if the Unity Academy closed its Wisbech site and relocated all students to the St Neots campus. The Executive Headteacher for TBAP East stated that a meeting would be taking place shortly

between TBAP, the Regional Schools Commissioner, the Service Director for Education and the Lead Education Officer to discuss this issue and offered to provide an update to the relevant county councillors once this had taken place;

- A Primary School representative asked for a breakdown of the number of pupils in out of county provision by gender and school phase;
(**Action:** Head of SEND Services)
- Officers undertook to include information on tuition packages for those being educated outside of school in the revised information to be circulated to members.

It was resolved to:

- a) consider the report on the work completed to date to review the specialist provision for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) that fall within the category in the SEND Code of Practice (2015) of social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs;
- b) give a view on the next steps identified to co-design an improved model that will provide a graduated response to needs, improve outcomes and target funding to meet children and young people's needs early and locally.

48. AGENDA PLAN

The Forward Agenda Plan was noted. Additional Working Group or public meetings would be arranged as necessary.

49. FUTURE MEETING DATES

The Chairman stated that provisional Schools Forum meeting dates for the 2018/19 academic year had been circulated to all members the previous week for information and that meeting invitations would follow shortly.

The Schools Forum was due to meet next on Friday 6 July at 10.00am in the Kreis Viersen Room, Shire Hall, but an additional meeting might be arranged before that date to consider the outcome of the Working Group's discussions.

Chairman
(date)