

## Cambridgeshire Schools Forum - Minutes

Date: Wednesday 14 December 2022

Time: 10:00am – 11:02am

Venue: Red Kite Room, New Shire Hall, Alconbury

Present:

Maintained Primary – Nicki Brown

Maintained Special Schools - Joanne Hardwick

Maintained Governor - Paul Stratford (Vice-Chair)

Academy Sector Appointments - Adrian Ball, Simon Bainbridge, Christopher Bennet, Jon Culpin (Chair), Jo Gillman (Sub) Ryan Kelsall, John King, Duncan Ramsey, Richard Spencer, and Carin Taylor.

Cambridgeshire County Council - Councillors Claire Daunton, Bryony Goodliffe and Simone Taylor.

Officers - Jonathan Lewis - Service Director Education, Tamar Oviatt-Ham – Democratic Services Officer and Martin Wade, Strategic Finance Business Partner.

### 33. Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest

Apologies received from Mark Vickers (Jo Gillman attending as substitute), Nadine Gooding-Hébert, Alex Pearson, Andrew Read, Clare Clark, Susannah Connell, Jon Duveen, Lesley Birch and Sasha Howard.

The Chair, Jon Culpin, and Richard Spencer declared an interest in relation to Minute 36: School Budget Setting, as both represented schools sited in the Growth Policy.

### 34. Schools Forum Minutes – 04 November 2022

With regard to actions from the last meeting, the Chair noted that, following the release of the Autumn Statement, he and the Director: Education had agreed to postpone discussion of how to take forward the concerns about funding.

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 November 2022 were approved as a correct record.

### 35. School Budget Setting 2023-24

The Schools Forum received a presentation that outlined the 2022-23 Schools Budget setting process, which was based upon national budget allocations and 2021-22 pupil numbers. The presentation covered;

- 2023/24 DSG Funding Arrangements
- Notional SEN / High Needs Contingency
- Retained Funding and De-Delegations (Maintained Primary only)
- Growth Funding / New Schools
- Next Steps

Officers raised the following points in the presentation in relation to the schools funding update;

- The £2bn awarded to schools in the Autumn Statement relieved but did not resolve pressures on the education sector. While the high needs block would be in receipt of a £400m over two years to meet inflationary costs, pupil growth, post-16 education and early-years would not receive an uplift. The energy bill relief scheme was scheduled to stop and pay awards for teachers would also challenge the service.

Individual members raised the following points in relation to the schools funding update;

- Queried what had instigated funding arrangements from central government. The officer responded that there had been a prioritisation of resource for further funding arrangements. Ministers had decided to proceed with a sector-led model for early years. This concerned officers as it resulted in the sector being market dependent.
- Confirmed that sixth form colleges and maintained nurseries would receive additional capital funding in December 2022, most likely as a continuation of the supplementary grant. Whilst the funding criteria linked funding to energy schemes, spending would be at the school's discretion.
- Acknowledged that the service was considering mitigating the energy crisis through framework development, loans, webinars and information provided to schools.

Officers raised the following points in the presentation in relation to Notional SEN / High Needs Contingency;

- The movement towards the direct national funding formula would create a cliff edge for the local authority. This would be mitigated by a stepped increase. The Schools Forum had requested the service move to a hybrid methodology for high needs contingency allocations. The local authority

anticipated providing current financial year funding to schools as a one-off payment in January 2023.

Individual members raised the following points in relation to notional SEN increases;

- Confirmed that allocation percentage splits had been calculated by scaling up the free school meal funding formula to align with statistical neighbours.
- Agreed officers would write to schools with information regarding high needs contingency allocations in the new year. Currently, the local authority had allocated £469k to schools, rather than the £450k available, to meet need. Therefore, the local authority would be revisiting calculation methods for high needs contingency funding going forwards.
- Learned that modelling for specific school profiles was not possible as schools were dependent upon individual statistics and factors. However, smaller primary schools with higher percentages of EHCPs and revised data from the DfE would be considered in future contingency funding allocations.
- Acknowledged that children from out of county attending Cambridgeshire schools had an effect on certain schools' levels of need which proved difficult to calculate or resolve.

Officers raised the following points in the presentation in relation to Retained Funding and De-Delegations (Maintained Primary only);

- Retained duty funding and de-delegations for maintained primary schools were scheduled to remain the same.

Individual members raised the following points in relation to retained funding and de-delegations;

- Asked that a funding break down was made available prior to voting on this matter. **Action Required.**
- Learned that the local authority had met with a trade union on 14 December 2022 to discuss the lack of change in charges. The officer recommended Schools Forum review this decision in 2023 to improve the transparency of decision making. **Action Required.**

It was agreed to defer recommendation d) until the number of maintained school representatives was quorate.

Officers raised the following points in the presentation in relation to Growth Funding / New Schools;

- Final data would be supplied by the DfE imminently, however, demographers' forecasts revealed an increase of individuals joining

secondary schools, and a reduction in primary school growth. This would impact individual schools, their funding levels and growth funding allocations.

- The proposed growth fund policy would give lump sum to schools with a 5% uplift for staffing. It would be formulaic to reduce bureaucracy in the application process. This policy would be shared with Schools Forum and the Headteacher Panel prior to release.

The Director for Education suggested Schools' Forum strategic planning looked further ahead when considering growth funding due to the need to build additional secondary schools in Cambridgeshire. Strategic planning would mitigate the impact of school building costs on existing schools in Cambridgeshire. A report on this was planned for 2023 and the officer may also consult the Department for Education on Cambridgeshire's growth.

The officer also agreed to amend the policy to include when schools identified for funding would be notified. This would be in February to allow for the schools' recruitment period. **Action Required.**

It was resolved to:

### Funding Formula

- a) Schools Forum are asked to note and comment on the updates to the Dedicated Schools Grant following the Autumn Statement.

### Notional SEN / High Needs Contingency.

- b) Schools Forum are asked to comment on the proposed increases to the % of delegated budget identified as notional SEN.
- c) Schools Forum are asked to comment on the revised option for allocating the available £450k high needs contingency fund in 2022/23.

### Growth Funding and New Schools

- e) Schools Forum are asked to approve the proposed changes to the Growth Funding policy and criteria to apply to 2023/24 only.
- f) Schools Forum are asked to note the proposed variations to pupil numbers.

## 36. Any Other Business

The following items had been added to the agenda plan:

- 13 January 2023 - Safety Valve Update;
- 24 March 2023 - Growth Funding.

The Director for Education and Chair of the Schools Forum advised full or high attendance (either by the representative or their substitute) for the meeting scheduled 13 January 2023.

Chair  
(13<sup>th</sup> January 2023)