

CAMBRIDGESHIRE SCHOOLS FORUM: MINUTES

Date: Friday 19 January 2018

Time: 10.00am – 11.55am

Place: Kreis Viersen Room, Shire Hall, Cambridge

Present: P Hodgson (Chairman), Dr A Rodger (Vice Chairman), S Blyth, T Bryden, L Calow, T Davies, A Hutchinson, A Matthews, D Parfitt, A Reeder, A Robertson, Dr K Taylor OBE and C Tooley (to 11.05am)

Observers

Councillor S Bywater	Cambridgeshire County Council
Councillor P Downes	Cambridgeshire County Council
J Duveen	National Union of Teachers
Councillor J Whitehead	Cambridgeshire County Council (from 10.30am)

Officers

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

Apologies:

Forum Members: S Connell (substituted by T Bryden), J Digby (substituted by C Tooley), A Goulding, J North (substituted by A Robertson), S Tinsley, R Waldau and M Woods

Observers: G Fewtrell (substituted by J Duveen)

29. DR KIM TAYLOR OBE

The Chairman offered congratulations on behalf of the Schools Forum to Dr Kim Taylor who had been awarded an OBE in the Years Honours List for services to education.

30. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were noted as recorded above.

31. MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON 13 DECEMBER 2017

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 December 2017 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

32. ACTION LOG

Updates to the Action Log had been circulated outside of the meeting. A copy of the updated log is attached at Appendix 1.

33. CAMBRIDGESHIRE 2018/19 SCHOOL FUNDING FORMULA

With the consent of the Chairman, officers tabled a revised Section 4 to the report and Appendix 1 which reflected some late changes to the funding formula (copies attached at Appendix 2 and 3)

The Head of Integrated Finance Services reported that the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) allocations had been published by the Department for Education shortly before Christmas 2017. The move to the National Funding Formula had led to an increase in funding for Cambridgeshire of £7.9 million compared to the 2017/18 baseline. The final Schools Block allocation for 2018/19 was £341.5 million which was an increase of £12.3 million compared to the 2017/18 baseline. The sum available for distribution to schools would be £338.3 million once adjustments were made to reflect the budget for the Growth Fund of £2.5 million and the transfer of £0.7m to offset pressures in the High Needs Block. This included an increase of £4.4 million over the indicative allocation to fund increased pupil numbers. It was expected that a further increase in the DSG Schools Block would be seen in 2019/20.

The Central Services Schools Block had increased by £30k reflecting the increase in pupil numbers. Subject to the Forum's approval it was proposed to use £17k of this to fund the increased cost of a single copyright license for Cambridgeshire schools and to allocate the remaining £13k to the retained local authorities duties budget to support services to the additional pupils. Final allocations for all DSG funding blocks for 2018/19 were:

TOTAL DSG BUDGET	2017/18 Baseline £M (a)	2018/19 Indicative Allocation £M (b)	2018/19 Increase (Dec 2017) £M (c)	2018/19 Final (Dec 2017) £M (d = b + c)	Movement Baseline to Final (e = d - a)
Central Services Schools Block	7.95	8.00	0.03	8.03	0.08
Schools Block	329.2	337.1	4.4	341.5	12.3
High Needs Block	64.8	65.6	0.3	65.9	1.1
Early Years Block	34.4	34.4	3.7	38.1	3.7
Total	436.35	445.1	8.43	453.53	17.18

On the basis of the figures available at the beginning of January 2018, officers had identified headroom of up to £250k. At its meeting on 9 January 2018 the Children and Young People Committee had resolved that this money should be fed into the formula so that the Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) was raised to a higher level of protection. Further checks and due diligence had since established a slight increase in costs relating to changes in business rate values and this, combined with changes to the Department for Education data set relating to free school meals, meant the headroom figure had reduced to around £38k. This sum would still be used to increase MFG protection.

The final funding formula for Cambridgeshire would be submitted to the Education and Skills Funding Agency during the course of the day and schools budgets and updated budget guidance would be issued within the next two to three weeks.

The following comments arose in discussion of the report and in response to questions from those present:

- Councillor Downes reported that he was the Children and Young People Committee's appointed County Council representative on the F40 Group. The

Group represented 42 of the lowest-funded education authorities in England and lobbied for the introduction of fairer funding for education. Following the introduction of the National Funding Formula the Group had decided to continue to operate, but with a shift in focus to the quantum of schools' funding. He sought the Forum's views on whether they would see continued value to his involvement on this basis. The Chairman confirmed that the Forum had no objection to this and welcomed Councillor Downes' offer to circulate relevant papers to members for information;

A member asked how the amount allocated to the High Needs Block was calculated by central government and suggested that this might be something which could usefully be explored by the F40 Group. Officers stated that the High Needs funding formula comprised various elements including an historic element and undertook to provide a briefing note;

(Action: Head of Integrated Finance Services)

- Members noted that the F40 Group was concerned at the increase being seen nationally in the number of children and young people with special educational needs and at the increasing severity of those needs and the associated costs. Officers stated that a regional officer group was looking at pressures relating to pupils with additional needs;
- Officers confirmed that there was no substantive change to the pressure of £0.7m on the High Needs Block in the light of the final DSG allocations;
- A secondary academy representative reported some concerns about proposals relating to a review of the Behaviour, Attendance and Improvement Partnership (BAIP) Service Level Agreement and devolved funding formula for alternative education provision. In his capacity as the Chairman of the Children and Young People Committee, Councillor Bywater stated that the Committee had received a report on this issue at its meeting on 9 January 2018. A number of representations had been received and the Committee had asked officers to provide more information on the implications of the proposed changes before a decision was made;
- A secondary academy representative highlighted the impact which the transfer of £0.7m from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block would have on individual schools' budgets. He stated that the consultation document on the proposals had not initially been received by all headteachers and expressed concern that the link to the consultation itself had been buried within the covering information. Another secondary school representative commented that the response rate to the consultation had been quite low and, whilst not challenging the validity of the decision, felt that a more meaningful consultation should be undertaken if needed in future years.

A special schools representative commented that they were comfortable that all schools within their group had had the opportunity to comment on the consultation. As a relatively new member they had been struck by how democratic and open the discussions at the Schools Forum were and highlighted the role of members in reporting back on these discussions to the groups which they represented and alerting them to key issues. Another member noted that secondary school representatives had been present for the discussion and decision to transfer £0.7m to the High Needs block. The head of the Cambridgeshire Primary Heads Group stated that they had encouraged all

members of their Group to respond to the consultation, but noted the high volume of email correspondence received by headteachers each day.

Officers acknowledged that the timescale for completing and returning the consultation had been quite short, but this had been due to the need to submit proposals to the Forum in December 2018. Officers had attended meetings of both the Cambridgeshire Primary Heads Group and Cambridgeshire Secondary Heads Group to brief headteachers on the proposals. The Chairman of the Children and Young People Committee had also written separately to all headteachers encouraging them to respond to the consultation. The consultation had been distributed via a global County Council email list and so should have reached every headteacher. However, officers would check that no schools had been omitted from that list.

(Action: Head of the Schools Intervention Service)

- The Vice Chairman reported that Heidi Allen MP had contacted him about attending a future Schools Forum meeting to discuss the current position on schools funding in Cambridgeshire. If members wished to take up this offer he felt that it would be helpful to establish a working group in advance to try to establish an agreed collective position on key issues such as early years, high needs and basic entitlement. Members welcomed this proposal and the Chairman suggested a meeting be arranged on 7 March 2018 so that the outcome could be shared at the Forum's next meeting on 9 March 2018.
- **(Action:** Democratic Services Officer)

It was resolved to:

- a) note the final Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) settlement for Cambridgeshire and the Cambridgeshire funding formula for 2018/19;
- b) approve the addition of £13k to the retained Local Authorities duties budget from the increase received in the Central Services Schools Block announcement.

34. DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT FINANCIAL POSITION 2017/18

The Strategic Finance Business Partner provided a summary of the overall 2017/18 Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) financial position to the end of December 2017. The net amount had reduced in-year due to further academy conversions. Paragraph 3.2 of the report noted a forecast in-year pressure of around £1.158 million against DSG allocations. This had been partially off-set in-year by around £940k through rates and recoupment adjustments, vacancy savings and one-off balances. However, these represented one-off savings which could not be guaranteed in future years and so pressures of around £2 million existed going forward. Paragraph 4.3 of the report set out the three options available in the case of a DSG deficit. As in previous years the intention was to carry the deficit forward pending the outcome of the wider review of special educational needs and disability (SEND) services.

In response to a question from a member, officers acknowledged the need for a meaningful benchmarking exercise. A targeted bench-marking exercise was planned across the three local authorities supported by the LGSS Integrated Finance Service (Cambridgeshire County Council, Northamptonshire County Council and Milton Keynes Council) and Peterborough City Council with whom Cambridgeshire County Council had a shared senior management structure across the People and Communities Directorate.

It was resolved to:

- a) note the contents of the report and provide comment on key areas.

35. DE-DELEGATIONS 2018/19

Members noted that consideration of this item had been deferred from the meeting on 13 December 2017 as no maintained primary school representatives had been present. As previously reported, the Cambridgeshire Primary Heads group was not recommending a continued de-delegation for the Cambridgeshire Race Equality and Advisory Service (CREDS) in 2018/19. Since publication of the report the insurance figure for 2018/19 had been confirmed at £19.22 per child, representing a small reduction against 2017/18. All other figures remained unchanged.

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

- An observer asked whether maintained primary school representatives were confident that they would not fall foul of anti-discrimination legislation if they chose not to renew the de-delegation to CREDS, highlighting the potential for financial and reputational damage.

A maintained primary school representative commented that the service provided by CREDS had not included advice relating to anti-discrimination legislation. A special schools representative commented that avoiding discrimination was part of core training and schools were clearly aware of their responsibilities. An early years provider representative commented that there was no central service providing advice to early years settings and so they saw no reason why maintained primary schools should require such a service in order to properly discharge their duties. Officers noted that schools could still choose to purchase this service from elsewhere and that this freedom to choose the provider was one of the reasons maintained primary schools had chosen not to renew the de-delegation. Interim support would be provided to schools whilst the CREDS service was wound down;

- A member noted the additional responsibilities which would be placed on schools under the new General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and asked what support the Local Authority might make available. They understood that the Council would act as the data manager for maintained schools, but were unclear on whether any support offered by the Council's ICT Service would be as a traded service and asked that clarification should be provided to all schools. Officers stated that some training had already been offered to primary headteachers, but undertook to provide further advice clarifying the position. (**Action:** Head of the Schools Intervention Service)
- The trade union representative asked about the arrangements to provide trade union facility time to maintained special schools as schools must be making a contribution to the cost in order to be eligible. Officers stated that the sums relating to maintained special schools and early years providers were very small and so were covered within general funds rather than under a specific de-delegation. However, they undertook to confirm the position with the Council's Human Resources team and provide advice. (**Action:** Strategic Finance Business Partner)

Maintained primary school representatives on the Schools Forum resolved to:

a) approve the continuation of de-delegations in respect of:

- i. contingency;
- ii. free school meals eligibility;
- iii. insurance;
- iv. maternity;
- v. trade union facilities time.

36. SOCIAL EMOTIONAL AND MENTAL HEALTH REVIEW

The Head of the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Service (0-25) and Principal Educational Psychologist provided a short update on the review of provision for children and young people with social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs. Work was progressing well and an interim report had recently been completed. The findings would link into a wider analysis of Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Sufficiency and Needs across Cambridgeshire which was also being undertaken. Amongst the issues being examined as part of the SEMH review were unfilled SEMH specialist places within the county, whether the geographical location of specialist provision matched identified areas of need and the work being done to support children and young people with SEMH needs in mainstream settings where appropriate.

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

- Officers confirmed that an action plan would be produced by July 2017 with implementation following on from then;
- Officers confirmed that the two new special schools currently being planned would be attached to mainstream schools and so their geographical location could not be changed. Both of these schools and the new special school which had opened in autumn 2017 were located in geographical areas which already had good special school provision. These were historic commitments and future provision would be considered in the light of the reviews' findings;
- A special school representative noted that most existing SEMH provision in the county was for boys and suggested that there was a need to obtain more data on different types of SEMH together with a cost analysis and comparison of outcomes across different types of settings. SEMH need was an issue which affected all schools, not just specialist settings, and it was important that this was recognised. Officers stated that there was a recognised need for a clear, graduated approach across all levels of needs and which covered both mainstream and special school settings. The detailed data could be included in the final report brought to the Forum;
- An observer commented that there were clear differences in the presentation of emotional need between girls and boys. Girls' behaviour could become more passive and withdrawn which could lead to their needs being less readily identified;
- A special school representative welcomed having a mental health lead in every school as a positive development;

- A special school representative commented that it would be important to link consideration of out of county and residential provision to wider social care and health provision in order to make an effective offer;
- A maintained primary school representative highlighted the difficulty in collating accurate information to measure SEND sufficiency when there were significant numbers of primary school children without Education Health and Care Plans who received additional support funded through individual school's budgets. Given the wider pressures on these budgets the sustainability of this support was limited;
- A maintained primary school representative commented that they had experience of some split placements between a specialist and mainstream setting and that these had worked well, allowing the child to maintain their place in a local school amongst their friends whilst sharing the expertise of special school staff with mainstream colleagues. The maintained special school representative stated that this was a growing offer;
- An early years representative commented that it was apparent that many children demonstrating SEMH needs at primary school had already been identified with these needs in their early years settings.

It was resolved to:

- a) note and comment on the report.

37. HIGH NEEDS PRESSURES AND ACTIONS

The Head of the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Service (0-25) and Principal Educational Psychologist stated that the work behind the report was designed to identify actions to make the savings needed now to address overspends within the High Needs Block. This would compliment the longer term strategy which would be informed by the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Sufficiency and Needs Analysis being carried out by external consultants. Some bench-marking work had been done in relation to Post 16 provision and the possibility of a tiered funding model. Officers were working closely with health service partners with a view to reducing duplication and increasing efficiency in the context of rising demand and increasing complexity of need. There was a recognised need to put in place clear monitoring systems to ensure best value for money.

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

- The maintained special school representative noted that some of the proposals within the report would impact on maintained special school budgets and emphasised the need to align this work with schools' budget building process;
- Paragraph 6.13 – Special Schools Outreach Budget: It was still proposed to provide outreach support and the proposed savings target of £121,000 was subject to further discussion with special school headteachers;
- A maintained primary school representative commented that the aim of the wider SEND Sufficiency Analysis and Review was to make expenditure sustainable

against baseline funding. Officers stated that the mechanics of moving to a hard funding formula were not yet clear, so they were working towards a sustainable approach within the quantum and to ensure as far as possible that the quantum was reasonable;

- An observer questioned whether recommendation (c) - to bring proposals for a tiered funding model for schools and post-16 providers to the Schools Forum in summer term 2018 - was realistic. Officers acknowledged that this was overly ambitious in relation to schools, but that it was likely that proposals relating to Further Education would be ready then;
- A maintained primary representative noted that it was proposed to bring key findings and initial recommendations from the SEND Sufficiency and Needs Analysis to Schools Forum in March 2018 and asked how schools would be involved. Officers stated that the external consultants would be meeting with colleagues in the People and Communities the following week and that an engagement plan would be agreed then;
- The academy special schools representative expressed concern about the proposed reductions in the special schools quantum and the timescale suggested. They also commented that over time there would be a need to look at thresholds for attendance at special schools. Officers stated that the main focus of the SEMH review was unfilled places and acknowledged the request that this should be made more clear to avoid causing schools unnecessary concern about the potential impact on their budgets;
- A maintained primary school representative asked whether places would be available in the county's new special schools for children who were currently being educated out of county. Officers stated that the focus would be primarily on addressing the need to use out of county placements in the first place. Children in existing placements could be brought back into county where this offered an appropriate solution, but this would need to be balanced with the need to avoid unnecessary disruption to settled placements;
- The maintained special schools representative commented that the banding system used by Suffolk and Essex County Councils made it financially attractive to them to place children in special schools in Cambridgeshire where the charge was lower than in their own counties;
- The trades union representative expressed concern that changes to Children's Centre provision could lead to delays in identifying additional needs in pre-school children

It was resolved to:

- a) bring key findings and initial recommendations from the SEND Sufficiency/Needs analysis to School's Forum in March 2018;
- b) bring back detailed recommendations from SEMH Review in March 2018;
- c) bring proposals for a Tiered funding model for schools and post 16 providers to School's Forum in summer term 2018.

38. FORWARD AGENDA PLAN

The Forum

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

It was resolved to;

- a) note the forward agenda plan.

39. DARE OF NEXT MEETING

The Cambridgeshire Schools Forum will meet next on Friday 9 March 2018 at 10.00am in the Kreis Viersen Room, Shire Hall, Cambridge.

Chairman
(date)