

CAMBRIDGESHIRE SCHOOLS FORUM: MINUTES

Date: 8th November 2019

Time: 10:00 a.m. – 13:40 p.m.

Venue: Kreis Viersen Room, Shire Hall, Cambridge

Present: Academy Board Member Philip Hodgson (Chairman)
Dr Alan Rodger (Vice-Chairman)

Maintained Primary Liz Bassett
Tony Davies
Sasha Howard

Maintained Special School Lucie Calow

Maintained Pupil Referral Unit Amanda Morris-Drake

Maintained Governor Paul Stratford

Academy Primary Susannah Connell

Academy Secondary Jonathan Digby

Academy Special School Dr Kim Taylor (OBE)

Academy Alternative Provision Nick Morley

Other Academy Appointments Jon Culpin
Richard Spencer

Early Years Reference Group Deborah Parfitt

Post-16 and Further Education Jeremy Lloyd

Observers Councillor Simon Bywater (CCC)
Jon Duveen (Teachers Unions)
Joe McCrossan (Diocese of East Anglia)
Andrew Read (Diocese of Ely)

Officers J Lee (From 10:26 a.m.), J Lewis, R Sanderson,
M Wade, J Veitch

Apologies: Maintained Nursery Rikke Waldau

Observers Councillor Joan Whitehead
Councillor Peter Downes

Maintained Primary Guy Underwood

Maintained Secondary Carole Moss

125. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies were received from Carole Moss, Guy Underwood, Rikke Waldau, and Councillors Peter Downes and Joan Whitehead

There were no declarations of interest.

126. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 12TH JULY 2019

The minutes of the meeting held on 12th July 2019 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

127. ACTION LOG

The Forum received the following updates:

Minute 87 – The Strategic Finance Business Partner informed the Forum that a Special Educational Needs (SEND) Recovery Board had been established specifically to look at the issues relating to the High Needs Block Funding. He commented that there was a proposal to bring a more detailed High Needs Proposals and Consultation Report to the January meeting. A member suggested that this report should be brought to the Forum before they make a formal decision.

Minute 112 – The Democratic Services Officer confirmed that the Academy Trust's balances had been circulated to the Forum. An Academy representative clarified that the figures circulated were from 2018 and therefore out of date.

Minute 119 a) - The Strategic Finance Business Partner stated that further information regarding this action would be covered in the presentation today.

Minute 119 c) - The Strategic Finance Business Partner explained that he had written to colleagues at the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) about the issues Cambridgeshire was facing. He commented that the Department of Education (DfE) had recently published the criteria and formula for growth funding for the 2019/20 financial year. Officers had populated this formula with their figures to calculate the amount of funding they would receive. However, they were still waiting on the completion of the October 2019 census, so they were unsure as to the Growth Funding they would receive. There was an ongoing issue regarding that new schools were not fully recognised in the growth formula nationally, this needed to be addressed further.

Minute 120 – The Head of Integrated Finance informed the Forum that Officers had a meeting with Nursery Head Teachers regarding the uncertainty around the early years maintained nursery supplements. He welcomed the news that Central Government had confirmed that this supplement would continue for another year. However, conversations still had to be had as this funding only lasted for one year. He suggested that the Forum should consider whether January 2020 was still the appropriate time to receive the report.

Minute 121 a) – The Forum were informed of the differences regarding the finance arrangements and accounting structure between Academy Schools and Maintained Schools. It was explained that the funding balances of maintained and academies schools were not comparable, as they had different systems and a different financial year end.

Minute 121 b) – The Head of Integrated Finance clarified that the training sessions were ongoing. Officers had been creating a working group that stemmed from the Finance Forum Seminar that had been taking place. The Strategic Finance Business Partner confirmed that they had twenty volunteers from the private, voluntary and independent sector, a workshop was going to be organised to discuss the ongoing budget issues faced by schools.

128. NOTIFICATION OF APPOINTMENTS AND RESIGNATIONS

The Forum was informed of the following appointments and resignations:

- a) As agreed at a previous meeting a place has been created to take account the new Maintained Secondary School at Northstowe and the Headteacher Carole Moss was now a member of Forum.
- b) Academy Alternative Provision following the resignation of Sarah Roscoe in June, Nick Morley has now been appointed as her replacement and was welcomed to his first meeting.
- c) Academy Representative Jane Horn resigned on 12th July. A replacement was being sought.
- d) Academy Representative Primary schools Anna Reeder resigned in July 2019. A replacement was being sought.
- e) Secondary School Academy Representative Andrew Goulding resigned in July 2019 and a replacement was being sought.

The Forum was informed that this would be Jonathan Digby's last meeting as he had resigned his seat on the Forum. The Chairman thanked him for his valuable contribution to the work of the Forum.

129. SCHOOLS FUNDING UPDATE – NOVEMBER 2019

The Forum received a report providing them with an update on the latest national funding announcements and local funding formula proposals for 2020/21. The Head of Integrated Finance drew the Forum's attention to the document 'Draft – School Funding Arrangements for 2020-21 – Cambridgeshire County Council Consultation with Primary and Secondary School' that had been tabled at the meeting. (**Attached as Appendix 1 to these minutes**). He stated that this document was brought to the Forum for comment only, as they would not be making any formal decisions on the Consultation at this stage.

The Service Director, Education informed the Committee that Officers at Cambridgeshire County Council were subject to Purdah regulations and therefore would be restricted as to the information they could discuss with the Forum.

The Head of Integrated Finance, the Strategic Finance Business Partner and the Service Director, Education outlined the information set out in the '2020/21 Dedicated Schools Grant Funding' PowerPoint presentation. (**Attached as Appendix 2 to these minutes**). The Head of Integrated Finance highlighted the fact that the figures in the Consultation were subject to change.

Forum members welcomed the 2020/21 National Funding Formula announcement but agreed that it did not mitigate the existing funding crisis that schools faced in

Cambridgeshire. Forum also raised their concerns regarding the political misrepresentation of the impact the new funding formula would have on the funding crisis faced by schools. The Service Director, Education stated that he would add the Forum's concerns into the consultation document.

2020/21 School Funding Arrangements

Individual members raised the following points in relation to the presentation:

- asked for more information regarding the further £1.5bn allocated to meet the additional Teacher's Pensions costs over the 3 year period. The Head of Integrated Finance stated that he had not received any detail on this. The Service Director, Education suggested that the Department for Education (DfE) might have used a proxy to allocate the money rather than actual cost.
- sought clarification regarding the Teachers' starting salary increase to £30,000 by 2022/23. The Service Director, Education stated that there was no separate grant for this increase. He explained that there would be a three year settlement, but the Council had not yet received any data for year two or three or any data that confirmed how much more money Cambridgeshire would receive.
- commented that even with the 4.8% increase in Schools Block funding for 2020/21, schools would still be considering the redundancies they would still have to make for September 2020.
- informed the Committee that due to historic under-funding of 16-19 Education, there had been strikes in two sixth form colleagues in the County. The comment was made that the proposed increase in funding for 16-19 education would not adequately safeguard high quality education.
- Suggested to Officers that if they agreed to the 1.8% transfer from the Schools Block to High Needs Block, a person representing a particular school highlighted that they were likely to have to lose possibly one or two Teaching Assistant's, which would lead to a likely increase in permanently excluded pupils, resulting in a larger deficit in 12 months' time. The Strategic Finance Partner confirmed that they had this discussion with the SEND Recovery Board about the impacts of the funding proposals.
- sought clarification regarding the impact of the amount of money received per schools for premises which were historically highly insufficient to meet the needs of schools and resulted in schools having to finance capital repairs from their revenue budgets. The Service Director, Education confirmed that he had not seen any announcements for capital grants, he suggested that funding levels could be in line with last year.
- suggested that the Consultation should include information on the changes the 2020/21 National Funding Formula would have on nursery provision as the crisis would continue and had only been delayed by 12 months. The Head of Integrated Finance confirmed that Officers could add this. **(ACTION)**
- sought clarification regarding the 19-25 education £5m deficit. The Service Director, Education confirmed that it was the additional cost to the High Needs

Block when the SEND reforms were implemented. He stated that they could provide more information on the breakdown of the £5m deficit. (**ACTION**)

- queried whether the proposed 1.8% transfer could happen again for 2020/21. The Strategic Finance Business Partner clarified that each block transfer had to be approved on an annual basis. Currently they did not know how much money there would be in the Central Schools Block for next year and therefore could not predict whether this transfer would happen again.
- asked Officers whether they would be in the same position next year and whether there would be any more proposed cuts to funding. The Service Director, Education stated that last year, he had not expected there would be an 11% increase in Educational Health and Care Plans. He was uncertain of the financial position the service would be in next year, although funding for education was due to increase again.
- raised concerns regarding the reduction of education provision over the years as a result of budget cuts. A member stated that it would irresponsible to agree to any more cuts to schools funding. It was stated that further cuts could lead to safeguarding issues within schools and questioned whether the impact of the transfer proposal measures had been fully risk assessed.
- expressed concerns regarding what would happen to existing provision if they did not approve the funding proposal. The Service Director, Education clarified that the Local Authority (LA) was currently funding the existing provision, which could not be sustained. The member commented that the proposals would just prolong an inadequate government financing system and did not solve the wider funding problem.
- expressed concerns regarding the proposed changes to the Schools Block funding and the difficulty of receiving Education Health and Care Assessment and Plans (EHCPs). The member suggested that his parents and schools had had to look privately to get assessments undertaken. Another member commented that the money schools received from EHCPs had stayed the same, while staffing costs had increased.
- queried the nature of the comments that Forum was being asked for on the 2020/21 School Funding Arrangements. The Head of Integrated Finance suggested that nothing in the presentation had to be necessarily commented on, but the Forum could request clarification on the data. The Service Director, Education suggested that Forum would have to decide how they wanted to respond to the 2020/21 National Funding Formula and whether they wanted to question certain elements of the proposed funding changes.
- informed the Forum of the point raised by the 'Worthless Campaign' regarding the proposed National Funding Formula.
- sought clarification regarding the discrepancy in information regarding the Minimum Per Pupil Guarantee's (MPPG) effect on the Funding Floor Factor. The Head of Integrated Finance explained that there was a Funding Floor on the 1.84% uplift on Per Pupil Funding. However, as the Council had MPPG funding now, there was no need for this factor. The Service Director, Education commented that unlike in the past, they had to take note of the Funding Floor. He noted the comment that it would be beneficial if the presentation explained

more clearly the interaction between Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) and MPPG when the Consultation went into the public domain.

- queried whether the Teachers Pay Grant was ending. The Service Director, Education confirmed that there was a commitment for it to continue. He commented that they had expected it to be added to the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) Funding which had not happened.
- requested more information regarding the 80% of the MFG that must be delegated through pupil led factors. The Service Director, Education clarified that Local Authorities must allocate at least 80% of the delegated schools block funding through pupil-led factors, this included: basic entitlement, deprivation, prior attainment, looked after children, English as an Additional Language (EAL), pupil mobility.
- discussed whether schools could make a one off contribution into the Schools Block from schools with large year end balances. The Service Director, Education and the Head of Integrated Finance raised concerns as to how this would be implemented. The Service Director, Education suggested that they could ask schools the question.
- the Service Director, Education highlighted that a Council in Dorset had proposed taking balances from schools. He stated that they would look into this further (**ACTION**).

Growth Funding and New Schools

Individual members raised the following points in relation to the presentation:

- queried the level of Growth Funding received. The Strategic Finance Business Partner suggested that he expected it to be at around the £3.3m, similar to that received last year.
- queried whether under the new National Funding Formula, would new schools opened in Cambridgeshire be supported by this funding formula or by the Local Authority (LA). The Service Director, Education stated that the opening of new schools in Cambridgeshire would incur a significant cost to the LA
- It was highlighted that there was no growth funding available for special schools. The Service Director, Education stated that the pressure created on the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) from special school places was considerable. The comment was made that there was going to be 100 more special school places in the next two years that were not funded.
- asked whether it would be beneficial for new schools to fully understand how the Growth Funding changes would affect them over the three years with a further suggestion made that new schools, should receive funding for three years. The Service Director, Education explained that the school agreed pupil numbers two years in advance to help with estimating teacher numbers. There was also ongoing dialogue with schools and adjustments were made. He stated that he would make sure this information was clear in the consultation events. (**ACTION**) The Strategic Finance Business Partner commented that they reviewed the funding for new schools on an annual basis.

- commented that it was beneficial that Officers had created the figures in the presentation based on the scenario where the Council received the lowest possible amount of funding from Central Government. The Service Director, Education stated that by formulating the budget based on the lowest amount of funding received they had been able to achieve an underspend which could be released back into the DSG. He commented that they needed to incentivise new schools to grow through fair funding.
- raised concerns regarding allocating a new school growth funding when an existing school in the same area had empty classrooms. The Service Director, Education explained that there were certain requirements around building new schools set out in the Section 106 arrangements. The Council needed to make sure that a new school had the correct amount of funding to be able to run effectively and to be able to resource itself. Another member also raised concerns regarding classrooms sitting empty while the Council were spending money to build new schools.
- queried if there had been issues where Secondary Schools had reduced their Published Admission Number (PAN) even though they had the physical capacity to enrol more students. The Service Director, Education stated that Officers had challenged reductions in PAN. He commented that he would like to see a return to an Indicated Admission Number (IAN) as it would save the Council money and keep children local. He noted that this would be something they could talk to schools about.

The Service Director, Education in reference to the Growth Funding recommendation set out in the report told the Forum that the Council wanted to be more transparent with schools regarding funding figures. The more the Forum could provisionally agree, the more robust the provisional figures they could provide to schools. He wanted to create the most realistic funding figures he could.

Centrally Retained Funding and De-Delegations – Central Schools Services Block (CSSB) Funding.

Individual members raised the following points in relation to the presentation:

- queried whether the decision had been made yet to make schools fund 20% of their broadband contract. The Service Director, Education clarified that it hadn't, the discussion surrounding this proposal was for discussion at this meeting.
- requested more information regarding the installation of Broadband for Secondary Schools in Cambridgeshire. The Service Director, Education stated that a fair allocation of Broadband cost would be a methodology based on the number of pupils in schools rather than actual cost of the connection.
- suggested it would be beneficial if the Forum could be shown the Broadband presentation presented last year. The Service Director, Education suggested that they could bring this back with the updated broadband funding model.
(Action)
- requested that when the consultation process began, Officers highlighted the broadband options which they considered to be the fairest for schools. The

Service Director, Education agreed and stated that the first consultation was taking place on the 14th November 2019.

- stated that their school did not have any Early Intervention Workers. The Service Director, Education clarified that he had delayed appointing any Early Intervention Workers as there was uncertainty whether the funding for the role would continue.
- sought clarification regarding whether authorities with higher historic spending had benefited from the 20% reduction on Historic Commitments. The Service Director, Education confirmed that this was the case.
- requested more information regarding what the contribution to Children's Services included. The Service Director, Education clarified that it funded areas such as: Early Help Services, Education Psychologists and Social Care Workers.
- asked for more information regarding the impact of the 50% cut to the Contribution to Children's Services. The Service Director, Education confirmed that the Council had recognised and anticipated this cut and had therefore put £1.5m back in to help replace this loss of funding, which had allowed the Service to put more money into the High Needs Block.
- raised concerns regarding the 32% increase in the cost of insurance. The Service Director, Education clarified that this was due to an increase in industrial injury and material damages claims. The Strategic Finance Business Partner suggested they could find more information regarding the breakdown of the increase in insurance cost. **(ACTION)**.
- there was a discussion on Risk Protection and whether this would be a cheaper alternative. It was acknowledged that it would be cheaper, but coverage would not be as good. The Strategic Finance Business partner indicated officers would bring back proposals on risk protection. **(ACTION)**

The Service Director Education suggested that a question in the consultation could be whether to de-delegate insurance or suggest that schools buy their own insurance **(ACTION)**.

- commented that the workload for the trade unions representative in schools had increased.

High Needs Block

Individual members raised the following points in relation to the presentation:

- raised concerns regarding the 1.8% transfer from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block and suggested whether it would be more beneficial to keep the deficit in the High Needs Block and not disaggregate it. This would clearly monitor how the High Needs Block impacted the deficit. This was not however considered to be possible with the challenge the Council faced financing the overspend on the high needs block.

- raised concerns regarding the fact that the recommendation in the report only proposed to move the deficit from the High Needs Block into the Schools Block. Schools would therefore have less funding and would have to start taking cost savings measures, such as making Teachers Assistant (TAs) redundant, which would have further negative knock on effects on service provision and added pressure on the Education Service with a need to look at other providers. The point was made that the proposals were just hiding the actual funding problem. The Service Director, Education highlighted that it was the LA's role to propose a budget, the LA then would decide the budget once Schools Forum and Schools had been consulted.
- informed Forum that most of the High Needs Block funding was transferred back into mainstream schools to help support children with Special Educational Needs (SEN). Quality assurance and risk assessment needed to be an important point in the ongoing discussion.
- suggested that the majority of the High Needs Block funding was allocated to children from more affluent families, but this was not reflected in the presentation figures. The Service Director, Education agreed and stated that if you looked at the distribution of Education Health and Care Plans, you could see that more were given to pupils in South Cambridgeshire, which was a more affluent area of the county.
- raised concerns regarding the fact that the documents used to formulate the High Needs Block Funding figures were significantly out of date.
- queried whether there was a possibility of not transferring anything from the Schools Block into the High Needs Block. The Head of Integrated Finance stated that this would be quite complicated as the LA would likely be supportive of a movement between blocks to reduce the pressures on the high needs block. This would potentially be going against what the Forum had agreed. The Service Director, Education commented that Officers did not want to be in conflict with the Forum, they had to try their best to provide a balanced budget.
- the Service Director, Education informed the Forum that the DfE required the LA to identify savings and balance the high needs block over a 3/5 year period. The current funding formula disadvantaged had decreased the amount of money coming through to Cambridgeshire. Officers stated that Shire Counties were the worst affected by the reductions in the High Needs funding formula.
- requested whether they could see the SEND review before any decisions were made. The Service Director, Education confirmed that he would share the proposal in future meetings and in the SEND working group. However, he explained that this would not solve issues around the amount of money in the system. **(ACTION)**
- informed the Forum that the Office for National Statistics (ONS) produced a report that outlined an insufficient impact assessment made regarding the introduction of the SEND reforms and set out the cost required from Local Authorities to implement this reform. Going forward they should provide impact assessments to see where the money was being spent and the effect it was having on the outcomes of young people. The Service Director, Education confirmed that they did quantify the funding gap between post 19 allocations when the reforms came in, and compared to last year he confirmed it was around

a further £5m increase in costs. He commented that this was why the High Needs Block was under such pressure.

- the Service Director, Education informed the Forum that he had received a letter from the ESFA stating that they would like to meet in order to address the pressures identified in Cambridgeshire and help create a recovery plan. The Chairman, with agreement from the Forum, proposed that members of the Forum namely teachers and School governors should also attend this meeting to support the Service Director, Education. The Chairman stated that the Forum needed to stand up for themselves regarding the funding formula issues, otherwise they would be having the same conversation every year.
- queried the amount of funding being allocated to out of county provision. The Member noted that the Forum had discussed proposals to try and reduce this last year. The Service Director, Education confirmed that the Council had performed a significant amount of work in this area, saving around £500,000 through the reorganisation of Out of County provision packages. However, the Council could not meet some children's complex needs, and further explained that while they wanted children to remain in-county, they had no places left for them in Special Schools. The cost was currently £10m.
- suggested that if a child's family placement was not sustainable, then this would lead to children going out of county to residential specialist schools at greater cost. It was a complicated relationship between education and social care provision. The Service Director, Education reassured the Forum that every child's placement over £100k and tuition package had to be approved by him.
- queried whether borrowing money to help fund the High Needs Block to stop children going out of county could be an option for the Council. The Service Director, Education questioned whether borrowing money was the right option as this still did not solve the revenue issues for schools and might not stop children going out of county. He stated that he would explore this option. **ACTION**. He informed Forum that three new special schools were being built, funded through section 106, DfE and Council funding.

The Consultation

Individual members raised the following points in relation to the presentation:

- Raising queries were raised on the changes to the MFG and CAP arrangements.
- The Head of Integrated Finance confirmed that they did not support the proposal to reduce the Age Weighted Pupil Unit (AWPU) for the transfer to the High Needs Block.
- The Service Director, Education stated that it was very important for people to attend the consultation events.
- Queried whether contributing to apply a funding cap was the appropriate method to use.

The Head of Integrated Finance drew the Forum's attention to the School Budget Scenario Excel document. He confirmed that the information found in this document

was based on the October 2018 census. A Member suggested that the excel spreadsheet should contain more background information regarding funding top-ups.

It was resolved to:

2020/21 School Funding Arrangements

- 1) Note and comment on the national funding announcements.

Growth Funding

- 2) Agree in principle to approve the following subject to large scale changes coming forward as part of the final settlement

- i) the revised growth fund criteria and funding rates for 2020/21
 - ii) the reduction of the centrally retained growth fund to £2m.

Unanimously agree:

- iii) the variation to pupil numbers for new schools.

Central Schools Services Block

- 3) Agree in principle:

- i) the reduced Contribution to Combined Budgets into 2020/21 as set out in slide 27.
 - ii) the continued use of the retained duties funding (adjusted for final pupil numbers) within the Central Schools Services Block (CSSB) to support ongoing functions.
 - iii) the continued retention of £10 per pupil from maintained schools for services specifically provided to maintained schools.

- 4) Provide comments on:

- i) the proposal for schools to be charged for 20% of the current broadband costs following the reduction in funding.
 - ii) the increased transfer of £1,138k from the Central Schools Service Block (CSSB) to the High Needs Block..

De-Delegations

- 5) Maintained Primary representatives on Schools Forum were asked to approve the continuation of de-delegations in respect of:
 - i) Contingency
 - ii) Free School Meals Eligibility
 - iii) Insurance Catch-Up

- iv) Maternity
- v) Trade Union Facilities Time
- vi) come back and make a final decision on de-delegations at a later Forum meeting following the results of the Consultation with schools on the basis that they should be informed that the maintained primary representatives on Schools Forum were minded to agree and supported all the above listed de-delegations on the basis of economies of scale and added value.

High Needs Block

- 6) provide comments on High Needs Block proposals and the potential impact for Cambridgeshire Schools.

Consultation Proposals and Process

- 7) provide comments on the proposed consultation process and areas for consultation.

130. REVIEW OF SCHOOLS FORUM

The Forum received a report providing an outline of proposals to the revision of the operation of Schools Forum. Attention was drawn to the recommendations of the report.

It was resolved to:

- a) approve setting up the following New Subgroups to consider funding under each of the main funding blocks –
 - schools budget (formula),
 - high needs block
 - and early years.
- b) approve the following nominations to them.
 - Dr Alan Rodger, Richard Spencer, Tony Davies, Jon Culpin and Philip Hodgson to the Schools Budget (formula) subgroup.
 - Liz Bassett, Dr Kim Taylor, Amanda Morris Drake, Nick Morley and Lucie Callow to the High Needs Block subgroup.
 - Deborah Parfitt, Rikke Waldau and Sasha Howard to the Early Year subgroup.
- c) from 2020-21 to agree a reduced Meetings schedule for Forum to meet in the following months:
 - November
 - December
 - February
 - March (reserve date)
 - July

- d) operation of the meetings to start with an informal slot from 9:30 until 10 prior to the public meeting and for there to be a training session offered after the main Forum meeting to support new members / refresh knowledge.
- e) reports to Schools Forum to be by a short covering report with the main detail included in presentations which will be available as part of the agenda despatch.
- f) to receive proposals for revised terms of reference and a forward training programme to the December meeting.

131. AGENDA PLAN

It was resolved to:

Note the agenda plan.

132. CHANGE OF DATE FOR THE SCHEDULED 27TH MARCH MEETING

The Forum agreed to reschedule the meeting scheduled for the 27th March 2020 meeting to the 28th February 2020.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Cambridgeshire Schools Forum will meet next on Wednesday 18th December at 10:00am in the Kreis Viersen Room, Shire Hall, Cambridge.

Chairman
18th December 2019