

**CAMBRIDGESHIRE SCHOOLS FORUM: MINUTES**

**Date:** Wednesday 13 December 2017

**Time:** 10.00am – 11.45am

**Place:** Kreis Viersen Room, Shire Hall, Cambridge

**Present:** P Hodgson (Chairman), Dr A Rodger (Vice Chairman), L Calow, S Connell, J Digby, D Parfitt, A Reeder, Dr K Taylor, S Tinsley, R Waldau and M Woods (from 10.15am)

**Observers**

G Fewtrell	Teachers' Union
N Hills	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**

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

**Apologies:** Forum Members: S Blyth, T Davies  
Observers: S Conant (substituted by N Hills)

**19. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

**20. MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON 3 NOVEMBER 2017**

The minutes of the meeting held on 3 November 2017 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**21. ACTION LOG**

The only outstanding actions related to information on the Growth Fund and Falling Rolls criteria which was covered by the report at Item 8 on the agenda (minute 26 below refers). The Action Log was noted.

**22. CAMBRIDGESHIRE SCHOOLS FUNDING FORMULA 2018/19**

The Head of Integrated Finance Services reported that the consultation with schools which was discussed at the previous meeting had been completed and the responses were summarised at Appendix B to the report. Marginally more schools favoured a transfer of funds from the schools block to the high needs block than those who opposed it. However, it was noted that the proposal in the consultation was to allow up to £1.7 million to be transferred, whereas officers now sought agreement to transfer a reduced sum of up to £0.7 million. The remainder of the £2.5 million pressure would be offset through a combination of the increase in High Needs Block funding in 2018/19, savings anticipated from the review of High Needs costs and the transfer of £0.5 million from the Central Services School Block agreed by the Forum at the previous meeting.

The constrained time frame for the consultation was acknowledged and in future a longer period would be allowed if possible.

The figures in the report remained indicative at this stage as the final Dedicated Schools Grant figures, census data and 2018/19 Authority Proforma Tool (APT) were still awaited from central government and the modelling would be refreshed when these were received. The Local Authority proposed to apply a cap at 3% for any schools making funding gains under the new formula which replicated the practice of the Department for Education (DfE). Without this cap expenditure would exceed the overall funding envelope for 2018/19. Officers confirmed that it might be possible to remove this cap in 2019/20 when an additional £5.4 million of funds would be available and the soft funding formula period was still in operation, but this was not guaranteed. The impact of using the sparsity factor had been reviewed and would make only a marginal difference in a small number of schools. The Looked After Children factor which had previously been applied in the formula would not be used in 2018/19 as this funding was being redirected through an increased rate for the Pupil Premium Plus Grant in 2018/19. The current proposals allowed headroom of around £1 million as some elements, such as weighted numbers for growing schools, still needed to be included and to allow for any changes arising from the final data sets. Officers drew attention to the 2018/19 overview set out at Appendix 3 to the report and in particular to the basic per pupil funding rates at Key Stage 4, an additional £22.9 million allocated to additional needs funding, an additional £17.6 million relating to low prior attainment and a reduction in lump sum from £150k to £110k.

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

- Officers confirmed that the minimum per pupil funding guarantee (MFG) was included in the modelling used to produce the figures. It was positive to note that there would be a reduction in the total number of schools receiving MFG protection, although 39 of these schools would be receiving it for the first time. The majority of these were typically located in rural areas and had less than 100 pupils;
- Officers confirmed that the school finance traded team would support schools who buy the service in their financial planning as normal once the final budgets had been set. If the financial sustainability of any maintained schools was identified as being at risk this would be discussed with officers in the Council's Education team;
- Paragraph 17: An observer commented that the percentage figures should be shown in whole numbers;
- A member commented that funding in their secondary school was treated as a single pot which was then used for the optimum benefit of all students;
- A secondary school member commented that they were comfortable with the 3% cap on gains in 2018/19 in the context described, but that they still felt that the total sum allocated by central government was not enough;
- Officers stated that if further slight adjustments were needed when the final figures were received from the Department for Education they would aim to stick with the national funding formula values and adjust the level of the cap on gains or the level of MFG protection;
- A member expressed concern about the potential impact of pay reviews, particularly on smaller schools;
- A member questioned whether high needs services would have to be cut if the Forum did not approve the recommendation to transfer up to £0.7 million from

the Schools Block to the High Needs Block and, if so, whether it was known which services would be affected. Officers stated that they had not yet looked at how the resulting deficit would be managed, but confirmed that it would require reductions to be made within the High Needs Block which would have a direct impact on children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities;

- In his capacity as the Chairman of the Children and Young People Committee and a member of the General Purposes Committee, Councillor Bywater emphasised the competing pressures which the Council faced across the board to finance key services;
- A member commented that the predicted overspend on in-county special schools was significantly less than the costs which would arise from providing additional out of school tuition or out of county education to the children concerned;
- Officers stated that it was likely that a request to transfer some funds from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block would be made for 2019/20 to continue to manage the transition to the hard funding formula, but that under the Government's current plans this would be the last year that this flexibility would be available;
- A member welcomed the planned sufficiency survey which would help inform decisions going forward;
- A member commented that the decision to cap funding gains to 3% could have a significant impact on some schools which would otherwise have received a higher amount. Officers stated that these schools would still be receiving an uplift in funding, the cap reflected the DfE approach for 2018/19 and that the 3% cap was required to allow the local authority to manage within the overall budget;
- A member commented that Peterborough's Schools Forum published the funding figures for individual schools. Officers stated that the practice in Cambridgeshire was to focus on the principles underlying the allocation of funding and the indicative figures provided by the Department for Education, but they would reflect on this going forward;
- Several members asked that it should be made clear that Cambridgeshire schools as a whole remained underfunded.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) approve the transfer of £0.7m from the Schools Block to the High Needs block in 2018/19;
- b) discuss the responses to the consultation with schools and the Authority's funding formula proposals for 2018/19; and
- c) approve the Authority's funding formula proposals for 2018/19.

## **23. DE-DELEGATIONS 2018/19**

In the absence of any maintained primary school representatives, consideration of de-delegations for 2018/19 was postponed until the meeting on 19 January 2018. The Director of Learning stated that de-delegation for the Cambridgeshire Race Equality and Advisory Service (CREDS) had been discussed the previous day by the Cambridgeshire Primary Heads Group and they were not minded to include this in the de-delegations for 2018/19.

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

Officers advised that discussion of top-up funding due to Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) or from the Special Educational Needs Inclusion Fund would be postponed until the meeting in January 2018 as this had not yet been discussed with Early Years providers' representatives (paragraphs 4.4-4.6 referred). With the agreement of the Chairman, the Strategic Admissions Manager tabled an additional appendix to the report which had been omitted from the published papers (copy at Appendix 1).

The Department for Education (DfE) had recently published the Early Years National Funding Formula hourly rates for 2018/19. This confirmed that there would be no increase to the baseline funding rate and that the basic rate paid to providers would remain unchanged at £4.04 per hour. An additional Nursery School supplement would continue to be paid to local authorities until 2019/2020 so that current funding levels could be maintained. During its first term in operation 2415 children had taken up their extended childcare entitlement and it was expected that this figure would increase during the next term.

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

- Officers confirmed that Disability Access Funding would be paid be paid direct to providers. In accordance with DfE guidance this was paid as a lump sum for the full school year and did not move with the child if they changed setting;
- The Early Years Providers' Reference Group representative stated that these figures had been considered by the Group and very reluctantly endorsed, but that providers did not believe the sum of £4.04 per hour was sufficient;
- The Maintained Nursery Sector representative stated that the cost to providers of those families taking up the 30 hour entitlement was crippling. Nationally, many maintained sector nursery providers were closing down. The Government's policy was creating a demand for 30 hour provision which settings could not afford to deliver and there was an urgent need to feed this message back to central Government;
- An observer questioned whether there was a realistic, modelled assessment of the hourly rate needed to deliver the extended entitlement in a sustainable way and emphasised the need for hard data if it was intended to lobby central government on this issue. Early Years representatives suggested that a minimum hourly rate of £4.80 in the maintained sector and £5.00 in the private sector would be required, although they emphasised that these were average figures and that variations in pay and on-costs varied significantly between providers. Officers undertook to follow this up with the Early Years Providers' Reference Group to get a snapshot of the costs of different sectors and in different geographical areas, although due to pressure of other business it would not be possible to provide comprehensive information in time for the January meeting;  
(**Action:** Strategic Admissions Manager)
- Another observer highlighted the complexity of the funding arrangements and questioned whether this was preventing some settings from accessing all of the top-up funding they were eligible to claim. They also questioned how some settings seemed to be managing within the current rates whilst others felt it was unsustainable and asked what was being done differently in those settings which

were managing best. Officers offered to provide an update based on the autumn figures when these were available;

**(Action:** Strategic Admissions Manager)

- Officers confirmed that settings in receipt of pupil premium funding were required to state what it was used for.

Summing up, the Chairman highlighted the need for hard data about the actual cost of delivering the extended entitlement if the Forum wished to lobby central Government on this issue.

It was resolved to:

- a) note the contents of the report; and
- b) approve the planned Centrally Retained amounts for 2018/19 set out at Section 5 of the report (approximately 3.4% of current funding).

## **25. HIGH NEEDS PRESSURES AND ACTIONS**

The Head of Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Specialist Services (0-25) outlined the continuing pressures being faced within the High Needs Block. The increasing demand for services combined with the greater complexity of needs being identified meant that the pressure on funding was unsustainable. A root and branch review was being conducted to establish how and where the available resources would best be spent. Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council had jointly commissioned a sufficiency and need analysis in order to target services to those in most need and to inform a five year plan. A review of social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) provision was also underway and importance of engaging partner organisations and stakeholders in both reviews was fully recognised. One of the areas of greatest need in Cambridgeshire related to autism spectrum disorders and a more detailed analysis of need and projected figures would be included. Top-up funding for post-16s was higher in Cambridgeshire than amongst the county's statistical and regional neighbours and this would also be explored in more detail. A significant overspend existed in relation to SEN placements and out of school tuition costs and the type and availability of provision would be reviewed as well as the cost of the provision. The practicality of offering a more transparent model of educational psychology services to which schools could choose to subscribe was being explored and schools would be consulted on this in February 2018.

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

- A member asked for clarification of the statutory requirements funded from the High Needs Block so that members could be clear about the amount of discretionary funding available. Officers stated that this would be included in the report submitted to the Forum in January and noted that the Executive Director for People and Communities had established a SEND Performance Board and that this would be reviewing the Council's statutory duties and discretionary provision as part of its role;  
**(Action:** Head of SEND Specialist Services 0-25)
- Officers confirmed that the base funding level for pupils at special schools was set nationally;

- A member questioned whether any benchmarking was done against comparable local authorities. Officers stated that the business team had been tasked to explore this issue;
- A member suggested that a detailed analysis should be carried out of expenditure on children and young people with autism spectrum disorders including how much was being spent specifically on that cohort, how other local authorities managed their budgets to provide inter-agency support to this group, any available cost comparators and whether there were any invest to save options available;
- An elected Member commented that the Children and Young People Committee was grappling with the same issue. There were no easy solutions and longer term solutions would not provide a quick fix;
- A member emphasised the need to examine the quality and effectiveness of provision as well as its cost;
- A special school representative paid tribute to the amazing work done for children and young people with SEND by colleagues in mainstream settings and highlighted the importance of sharing information about best practice across all sectors.

It was resolved to:

- a) present recommendations from the social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) review to School's Forum in January 2018. This would include recommendations for specialist provision and support from SEND Services;
- b) bring a detailed action plan and identified savings for the High Needs Block to the School's Forum in January 2018;
- c) bring proposals for subscription for the Educational Psychology team to School's Forum in January 2018;
- d) bring key findings and initial recommendations from the SEND Sufficiency/Needs analysis to School's Forum in March 2018;
- e) bring proposals for a tiered funding model for schools and post 16 providers to School's Forum in March 2018.

## **26. GROWTH FUND AND FALLING ROLLS CRITERIA 2018/19**

At the Schools Forum meeting on 3 November 2017 members had asked officers to look again at the Department for Education's guidelines on falling rolls and to advise how many Cambridgeshire schools would potentially qualify for funding. This work had been completed and officers advised that only one Cambridgeshire school would meet the DfE criteria in 2018/19. On this basis officers' advice remained that that there was insufficient justification to create a Falling Rolls Fund in 2018/19.

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

- Officers confirmed that £2.5 million should be sufficient to meet anticipated growth in 2018/19;
- A member asked whether the sums involved for the school which would meet the DfE criteria were significant. In their view the decision on whether or not to

establish a Falling Rolls Fund should not be based on the number of schools which would qualify, but on the significance of the sums involved to the school/s which would meet the criteria;

- Officers stated that to qualify for the Falling Rolls fund there must be an expectation that the number of students would recover; there was no mechanism for supporting a school where this was not the case. In addition, schools must be deemed good or outstanding by Ofsted to qualify for this support which was why the Schools Forum had previously chosen not to establish a Falling Rolls Fund. However, in the light of the views expressed officers undertook to look again at this issue.

**(Action:** Head of 0-19 Place Planning/ Strategic Finance Business Partner)

It was resolved to:

- a) approve the continuation of the Growth Fund at £2.5 million for 2018/19;
- b) approve the criteria in Section 3 of the report, to be applied from April 2018, subject to Education and Skills Funding Agency approval;
- c) request officers to revisit the proposal that the Authority should not create a Falling Rolls Fund for 2018/19.

## **27. NEW SCHOOL FUNDING CRITERIA 2018/19**

The Strategic Finance Business Partner set out the key areas of funding and the funding bodies responsible for the various elements. The proposed pupil number adjustments for new schools were set out at Appendix C to the report and these would be confirmed on receipt of the October census and forecast data.

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

- A member noted that the funding was less generous than that offered by some other local authorities and questioned whether the county would still be able to attract the best multi academy trusts. Officers stated that discussions with the Department for Education suggested that going forward these figures would be based on a national formula;
- An observer questioned the inclusion of non-whole numbers in pupil figures in Appendix C.

It was resolved to:

- a) approve the proposed approach for new schools for funding pre-opening as set out in Appendix A to the report and post-opening diseconomies as set out at Appendix B to the report, to be applied in 2018/19.

## **28. AGENDA PLAN**

Members reviewed and noted the agenda plan.

## **29. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The Cambridge Schools Forum will meet next on Friday 19 January 2018 at 10.00am in the Kreis Viersen Room, Shire Hall, Cambridge.

The Chairman noted that this would be the last Schools Forum meeting for the Director of Learning who would be retiring at the end of December. Keith Grimwade had spent 37 years working in local government, 32 of which had been with Cambridgeshire County Council. During this time he had spent 12 years as a teacher at Hinchingsbrooke School and this experience had informed his work throughout his career. His commitment to the role of the Schools Forum had been evident throughout his time as Director of Learning and he had been a source of great help and support to schools across the county. Mr Grimwade thanked the Chairman for his kind words and said that he was certain that schools across the county were benefiting from the work done by the Schools Forum and the decisions it made.

Chairman  
(date)