

**CAMBRIDGESHIRE SCHOOLS FORUM: MINUTES**

**Date:** Friday 5<sup>th</sup> October 2018

**Time:** 10.00am – 11.50 am

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

**Present:** Dr A Rodger (Vice Chairman), S Blyth, L Calow,  
S Connell, J Digby, A Goulding, A Matthews, J North, D Parfitt, A Reeder,  
S Roscoe, Dr K Taylor OBE, R Waldau and M Woods

**Observers**

Councillor S Bywater	Cambridgeshire County Council
Julie Cornwall	Non-Teaching Union
Councillor P Downes	Cambridgeshire County Council
J Duveen	Teachers' Union

**Officers**

J Lewis, J Lee, M Wade and R Sanderson (Clerk)

**Apologies:**

Forum Members: T Davies - Maintained Primary  
A Goulding - Academy Secondary  
P Hodgson (Chairman)  
J Lancaster-Adlam, - Academy Alternative provision  
S Tinsley - Academy Special

Observers; Councillor J Whitehead - Cambridgeshire County Council

**66. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN**

In his absence, Philip Hodgson was appointed as the Chairman for the academic year 2018-19.

**67. APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIRMAN**

Alan Rodger was appointed Vice Chairman for the academic year 2018-19.

**68. ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Vice-Chairman welcomed the members of the public and press in attendance and stated that they were welcome to film, take pictures, tweet or blog during the meeting.

He also wished to place on record his thanks to Richenda Greenhill who had provided excellent support as the clerk to the Forum for the last three years and who had now moved on to other duties.

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

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

## 70. MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON 6<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2018

The minutes of the meeting on 6<sup>TH</sup> July 2018 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Vice-Chairman.

## 71. ACTION LOG

The action log was reviewed and updates noted.

With regard to the review of membership and proportionality and the action to explore whether the Forum could decide to terminate an appointment in the event of a member's repeated non-attendance (rather than asking the nominating group to do so), an oral update was provided. This explained that at Northamptonshire if a member failed to attend for four consecutive meetings without giving a suitable reason, the Forum Secretary was empowered to take steps to secure a replacement. This would be after reasonable efforts had been made to alert members that they were at risk before the meeting at which this rule could be triggered, Democratic Services were seeking further views from other Schools Forums using the Association of Democratic Services Services Officers (ADSO) forum. At the time of the meeting, no further information had been posted.

Mark Woods queried the academy Forum Members nameplate linked to the title designations of forum membership as he highlighted that he not only represented Academy secondary schools but also primary schools, and other members also had multiple representation roles. It was explained that he had been appointed in line with the national guidance to represent a specific sector.

The point was made that the newly appointed Chairman and Vice Chairman had only recently had their membership extended until the end of December 2018 (along with the Chief Executive Mark Woods) and therefore **the position regarding the outstanding election of academies members to the Forum needed to be resolved as a matter of some urgency through the Academy Proprietors Group. Action Jon Lewis.**

The Clerk would seek further updates on those actions reported which remained outstanding.

As an update regarding the Schools Forum Initiative for Fair Funding of Children's Education, the Vice-Chairman highlighted that the recent petition had obtained 3,000 signatures in three weeks. He also made reference to two letters received from the right honourable Nick Gibb, Minister of State for Schools Standards providing details of the funding that Cambridgeshire received, while making no reference to the money that had been taken away or the continual rising costs for schools (*e.g. teachers and staff pay, National Insurance and Pension Inflation and the Apprenticeship Levy*).

## CHANGE IN ORDER OF AGENDA

At the request of officers, the Vice Chairman agreed to take Item 10 'Growth Fund and New Schools Formula Funding Criteria' as the next item of business.

## 72. GROWTH FUND AND NEW SCHOOLS FUNDING CRITERIA 2019-20

Officer highlighted as an update to the report, from information only recently received, that the growth funding allocation from the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) for Cambridgeshire for 2019-20 appeared to be less than was currently being

spent, and was well below the level that officers had been expecting. For 2017-18 two census points had been used and officers needed to investigate further how the data had been applied. The issues appeared to be related to the number of schools opening and whether they were filled to capacity.

While officers were not expecting to propose significant changes, it was requested that **this report should be deferred and should come back to the next meeting when more accurate information would be available. Action: Martin Wade**

The Special School Academy representative queried whether the allocation should be based on demand for Special Education Needs requirements, as an increasing population would trigger the need for more Special Education Needs places with most special schools planning having been based on demographic trends. The Special School Academy representative suggested that what was needed was a similar paper on the finance needs for growth funding for the High Needs Block, taking account of population and migration. Officers highlighted that the reality would be that if more money was added to the High Needs Block, this would have to be from a reduction of funding in other areas if no additional funding from Government was received.

It was agreed to defer the report.

## **CHANGE IN ORDER OF AGENDA**

At the request of officers, the Vice Chairman agreed to take Item 7 'Dedicated Schools Grant Financial Position 2018-19' as the next item of business.

### **73. DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT FINANCIAL POSITION 2018-19**

The report provided a summary of the overall 2018-19 Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) financial position to the end of August 2018. As previously reported to Schools Forum, a deficit of £720k had been carried forward on the overall DSG at the end of 2017/18. Following confirmation of final prior-year Early Years adjustments by the ESFA, this figure had decreased to £642k. However based on current commitments and the likelihood of increased demand over the latter part of the year it was likely that the DSG deficit would increase and be in the region of £4.5m unless reductions in spend or one-off mitigations were identified.

While it was explained that there were three options to deal with a DSG deficit, given the current in-year deficit position of the Local Authority, the only realistic option was to seek from Schools Forum at the January meeting the authority to carry forward the deficit to the following year, as set out in the options within the DSG conditions of grant. Under the new National Funding Arrangements this would require a recovery plan to be produced and submitted to Central Government. Central Government was indicating that the High Needs Block was too high nationally and needed to be reduced, which for Cambridgeshire would mean that the gap would increase as Central Government provided less resources. The Special School academy representative reiterated that the High Needs Block money received, did not reflect current growth needs.

Forum noted the contents of the report.

### **74. CAMBRIDGESHIRE 2019-20 FUNDING FORMULA**

This report provided Schools Forum with an overview of the School Funding

arrangements for 2019-20. The numbers in the report were indicative as they would need to be updated to reflect October 2018 census data and refreshed data sets, as well as local decisions that might be required. Updated information from the Department for Education (DfE) was not expected until mid-December. As in previous years, there was the requirement to submit the Authority Pro-forma Tool (APT) with final budget figures to the Education and Funding Skills Agency (ESFA) in mid-January.

The overall DSG indicative allocations for Cambridgeshire as announced were set out as follows, with further details still awaited on Early Years. For illustrative purposes that particular figure had been maintained at the 2018-19 level.

<b>Cambridgeshire 2018-19 Indicative DSG Allocation</b>			
<b>Schools Block</b>	<b>Central Services Schools Block</b>	<b>High Needs Block</b>	<b>Early Years Block (at 2018-19 level)</b>
£346.5m	£8.1m	£66.7m	£35.9m
DSG Total £457.2m			

Issues highlighted included:

- the Schools Block would see an increase in its funding of £5m compared to 2018-19.
- The Schools Block continued to be ring-fenced although some flexibility continued to allow local authorities to transfer up to 0.5% from the Schools Block to other blocks which equated to £1.7m and would be a one-off transfer in 2019-20. Under the operating guidance any such proposal required consultation with all schools.
- The DfE would be allocating Growth funding on a formulaic basis allocated to local authorities as detailed in paragraphs 3.8 to 3.10 and Appendix 1 of the report. Growth funding would continue to be allocated to schools based on the local growth fund criteria for Cambridgeshire. Indicative Growth Funding from the DfE was £3.3m compared to a spend of £5m in 2018/19 meaning a potential shortfall of £1.7m which would impact the Schools Block overall. With a new secondary school also now opening this would require subsidising.
- Paragraph 2.4 of the report highlighted the key High Needs factors contributing to the DSG in year pressures for 2018-19.
- The DfE had announced that the soft formula would be used until 2021.
- The High Needs National Standard Funding Formula (NFF) remained unchanged. There have been minimal changes to the NFF factors with the addition of one optional factor to enable authorities to apply a factor to ensure that there was a minimum 1% increase per pupil funding compared to the 2017-18 baseline. It was not proposed to introduce this funding factor into the Cambridgeshire formula on the basis that all other mandatory NFF factors were being applied, including the minimum per pupil levels of funding.
- There was one change to the unit rates in the NFF, to reduce the Primary Low Prior Attainment unit rate from £1,050 per pupil to £1,022 per pupil as detailed in the report. The Cambridgeshire formula was already aligned to the NFF, following the work undertaken in the 2018-19 budget setting.

- The Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) was continuing under the arrangements for 2019-20 and therefore any redistribution within the formula would be limited to a reduction of minus 1.5% per pupil. As in previous years, the initial proposal was that the MFG for 2019-20 should continue to be set at 1.5% in the Cambridgeshire formula. It was highlighted that a funding cap would again be required in order to reflect the cap of 3% in 2019-20, including the DfE's arrangements.
- The DfE had announced increased funding for the High Needs Block representing an uplift of 1.4% in 2019-20 compared to 2018-19 and a 2.9% increase from the 2017-18 baseline. As already discussed, this would be insufficient to cover current growth pressures or to fund existing services.

Given the High Needs pressures discussed and in reports on other agenda items, officers were looking to consult with schools on a transfer of up to £1.7m from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block. The consultation arrangements to be discussed later in the meeting.

In discussion the Early Years representative highlighted that with the removal of Early Years Access Funding some of the money moved to the High Needs Block was required in the Early Years Block to help fund Education and Health Care Plans (EHCPs) as currently there was no funding for under threes. Such funding would help address their needs at an early age and prevent some of the issues experienced as they became older and moved into the primary sector. **The Vice Chairman asked that the implications should be modelled as part of the pressures to be consulted on and reported back to Forum. Action Jon Lewis**

The report was noted.

## **CHANGE IN ORDER OF AGENDA**

At the request of officers, the Vice Chairman agreed to take Item 9 'Central Schools Block Retained Funding and De-delegations as the next item of business.

### **75. CENTRAL SCHOOL SERVICES BLOCK (CSSB), RETAINED FUNDING AND DE-DELEGATIONS**

This report set out the details of:

- Mechanism for the CSSB, and contribution to combined budgets.
- Ongoing functions previously funded by the ESG.
- Proposed de-delegations for maintained primary schools (upon which only the maintained primary representatives were able to vote)

and sought approval in respect of retained funding and the set out de-delegations arrangements.

The Central School Services Block (CSSB) included funding for responsibilities previously within the Education Services Grant (ESG) and responsibilities previously funded through centrally retained Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). The ability to de-delegate from maintained primary schools was to continue into 2019/20 and along with the CSSB, local authorities were able to request an additional contribution from maintained schools to support the removal of the general duties funding. The report provided an update on the Central Schools Services Block which from the latest figures, was due to receive approximately £8,083k in 2019/20 to be further adjusted based on

the October 2018 census. Illustrative CSSB Funding for 2019-20 was set out in the tables under paragraph 2.1 of the report with more detail included in subsequent paragraphs.

It was highlighted that currently £733k of the contribution to combined budgets supported the Early Intervention Family Workers with £52k, supporting Primary funding arrangements and other contractual arrangements and the remaining £3,027k supporting a number of services within the wider People and Communities Directorate. The funding had been historically retained by the Local Authority (LA) and never formed part of the Schools Budget. Therefore any reduction would impact on services across both maintained and academy schools. If not approved, the Local Authority would have to consider increasing charges to support current activities. This was explained within the wider budget context that the local authority was facing with measures currently being undertaken to seek to address the current year's deficit and a projected deficit of £21m in 2019-20. This had included an announcement the previous day that all council staff above a certain grade would now be required to take three days unpaid leave over the forthcoming Christmas period.

Attention was also drawn to the detail:

- of the new Wide Area Network (WAN) solution, highlighting that the current pooled arrangement for securely-managed network services provided equity across Cambridgeshire Schools and with the new arrangements expected to provide significantly improved services. The annual revenue contribution of £1.458m had previously been approved by Schools Forum until the end of 2019 and future arrangements were being explored.
- of Retained Duties funding, with the proposal to continue to apply retained duties funding received as part of the CSSB to support ongoing functions and to continue to retain £10 per pupil from maintained schools for services specifically provided to maintained schools.

With Schools Forum voting on recommendations a) to d) and the maintained Primary school representatives only voting on recommendation e)

**It was resolved:**

- a) to approve the continued transfer of £500k from the Central Schools Service Block (CSSB) to the High Needs Block.
- b) to approve the continuation of the £733k for Early Intervention Support Workers and £3,027k for other Historic Commitments to Contribution to Combined Budgets into 2019/20.
- c) to approve the continued use of the retained duties funding (adjusted for final pupil numbers) within the CSSB to support ongoing functions.
- d) to approve the continued retention of £10 per pupil from maintained schools for services specifically provided to maintained schools.
- e) to approve the continuation of de-delegations in respect of:
  - Contingency
  - Free School Meals Eligibility
  - Insurance
  - Maternity
  - Trade Union Facilities Time

## 76. HIGH NEEDS BLOCK

This report provided Schools Forum with the update detail on the High Needs Block (HNB) which included:

- historical trends, including levels of HNB received in the last five years compared to actual spend and pupil numbers, highlighting that, while the overspend figure shown for 2018-19 in the table in paragraph 1.2 suggested a figure of £3.3m, it would in fact be at least £4.5m by the year end as referenced earlier in the meeting.
- highlighting that the overall number of Education and Health Care Plans. (EHCP's) maintained by Cambridgeshire had increased significantly over the last three years.
- The County was currently experiencing an unprecedented increase in requests for specialist SEMH (social, emotional, and mental health) provision with local provision now full,
- The number of young people not able to be placed in County due to lack of places in SEMH provision added an additional demand to the High Needs Block.
- The rising pressures on the Out of School Tuition Budget. (£60k was spent a week on out of school children)
- There were real difficulties currently with the data from special schools which required further analysis.
- As already referenced earlier in the meeting, of the three options to deal with a deficit detailed in paragraph 1.5 due to the Children and Young People's budget currently forecast to overspend by £8m, the Local Authority (LA) was not in a position to consider meeting the overspend from general resources and therefore the real issue was around option three obtaining consent from Schools Forum or failing that, from the Secretary of State, to fund the deficit from the Schools Budget.

The report set out the key themes that had emerged and the key concerns highlighted within the draft Special Education Needs (SEND) Strategy launched in September 2018 and the actions proposed to be taken. As already referenced, that despite all the actions detailed in the report, there was expected to be a significant deficit at the end of the current financial year to be carried into 2019-20 with the indicative High Needs Block allocation only providing a small uplift in funding compared with 2018-19 levels. As a result, there was a need to review how services could be provided with less money. While the system had been coping, a different mind-set was required going forward.

In the subsequent discussion points made included:

- **a request that for the next meeting the main areas of overspend highlighted in the table under para 1.4 needed to be broken down further to show age profile and location in the County. Action: Jon Lewis**
- stating that while reference was made to the suggestion to increase the funding to the High Needs Block, the report did not provide details of the implications for money per pupil and officers required more time to model what the implications were of the High Needs pressures, including those in early years settings.
- Raising a question on where Health sat in the discussions, as if the focus was on a system shift, they required to be part of the solution. Reference was made to diagnosis of special needs now being identified as early as two weeks old.
- Health visitors encouraging parents to apply for EHCP's as well as the demand from parents for them. Parents had much higher expectations for specialist

treatment support. Tribunals also tended to uphold decisions where specialist treatment had been sought and initially denied.

- **With reference to home tuition, there was a request for information on how many of them had an EHCP Action: Jon Lewis**
- More detail being required with regard to actions in areas such as reducing Out of County placements and reducing Home tuition and the effect they were having. A headteacher made the point that they did not have enough information currently to make an informed decision. Officers undertook to organise training workshops to provide more information in order that decisions could be made at a later Schools Forum meeting.
- The special maintained representative made the point that capacity had been built over a period of time to improve the opportunities for pupils, but this was now not sustainable going forward within current resourcing.
- The special academy representative highlighted that positive steps had been made with heads and schools being more involved in terms of early diagnosis. As a result of the work undertaken by special schools many more children now able to stay in main stream schools. However, the Government needed to provide sufficient funding to properly resource the needs identified.
- It was suggested that SEMH needs provision required to be resourced at a local level in networks of primary and secondary schools working with special schools.
- One observer asked what was the professional opinion regarding the main reason for the huge increase in SEN requirements; was it in respect of medical advances or social changes / factors? In reply there were various reasons including more foetal abnormalities identified and then surviving through improved medical care, earlier detection of autism / behavioural issues, greater identification of genetic / chromosome issues. As a result, there was better detection, linked to the drive to identify special education needs at an earlier stage. Due to this, it was then vital to target funding as early as possible to help provide the best outcomes for the child going forward.

In a discussion on decision timings, it was considered that the reserve date on the 9<sup>th</sup> November was too early to make any decisions regarding moving resources from the Schools Block to the HNB as consultation with schools as more detail was still required. In addition, members of Forum also required more detail on:

- The learning difficulties of Out of County placements
- Information to have a discussion on 19-25 provision
- Demography analysis to extrapolate what was coming through in terms of identified requirements and how they were to be dealt with.
- A Risk Management Framework document for schools.

**It was agreed that the 9<sup>th</sup> November date would be appropriate for a private workshop for Forum, concentrating on the pressures around the Special Needs Block and early years' settings, with an invite to be extended to Families / Social Care / Health and Business Intelligence officers. Action: Jon Lewis**

**Officers would arrange separate briefings with Primary and Secondary heads and also governors regarding the consultation document to include:**

- **implications for removing up to £1.7m and its impact per pupil and individual schools,**
- **risk management, including the implications of heads not agreeing to a transfer of additional resources to the HNB from the Schools Block and**



**what other options were available and their costs on the knowledge currently available.**

- **Time tables on what options were available and the potential cost of any identified redundancies.**
- **Outlining the position on growth funding.**
- **Making explicit what the LA was recommending.**

**Actions on the above: Jon Lewis**

In addition, regarding having papers available two weeks before Forum, the 30<sup>th</sup> November meeting was seen as being too early and therefore it was agreed officers should look for a date later in December. **Action Democratic Services** (*post meeting note: subsequently scheduled for 14<sup>th</sup> December*)

#### **77. AGENDA PLAN**

The agenda plan was reviewed and noted to include the change to the dates and to include the Growth Fund deferred Report in the next scheduled meeting of Forum.

#### **78. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The reserve date of 9<sup>th</sup> November to be used for a Special Needs Block discussion workshop. The 30<sup>th</sup> November date to be moved to a date in December. (*post meeting note: subsequently scheduled for 14<sup>th</sup> December*)

Chairman  
14<sup>th</sup> December 2018