

## Cambridgeshire Schools Forum - Minutes

Date: Friday 13 January 2023

Time: 10:00am – 10:50am

Venue: Red Kite Room, New Shire Hall, Alconbury

Present:

Academy Primary – Susannah Connell

Maintained Nursery - Alex Pearson

Maintained Primary – Nicki Brown, Sasha Howard and Guy Underwood

Maintained Special Schools - Joanne Hardwick

Maintained Governor - Paul Stratford (Vice-Chair)

Trade Unions - Jon Duveen

Hospital Education - Nadine Gooding-Hébert

Diocese of Ely Church Schools - Sarah Conant

Academy Sector Appointments - Adrian Ball, Christopher Bennet, Jon Culpin (Chair), Ryan Kelsall (from 10.15am), John King, Duncan Ramsey, Richard Spencer, and Carin Taylor and Mark Vickers.

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

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

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

Apologies were received from Simon Bainbridge, Lesley Birch, Duncan Ramsey and Andrew Read (substituted by Sarah Conant).

There were no declarations of interest.

### 38. Schools Forum Minutes – 14 December 2022

It was resolved:

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 14 December 2022 as a correct record.

The action log was noted.

### 39. Proposed Future Dates for Schools Forum 2023-24

It was noted that school holidays and bank holidays were considered when dates were scheduled.

The Democratic Services Officer agreed to determine whether the meeting for Friday 23 February 2024 had been scheduled to occur in half term. **ACTION REQUIRED**

It was resolved to:

Approve the dates for future forum meetings as set out Section 3 of the report.

### 40. Schools Budget Setting

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

- Schools Funding Formula
- Education Functions and De-Delegations
- High Needs Block
- Central Schools Services Block
- Early Years

The national funding formula had been announced and 2023/24 dedicated schools grant allocations differed from 2022/23 allocations, with an overall 5.3% increase. Cambridgeshire was likely to receive £15m from the maintained schools additional grant on 1 April 2023, at the same time, the academy sector would also receive funding; £2bn would be received from the core schools budget. Following these allocations, a review of the safety valve submission had been requested.

The additional funding available to meet the revised minimum per pupil number and minimum funding guarantee had reduced. Therefore, less protection was required to top schools up to those levels leaving greater funding available for allocation. Pupil growth within both primary and secondary schools was uneven and delivery would be based upon pupil numbers in individual schools and cost pressures.

Other highlights of the officer presentation included notification that special schools would be contacted with regard to the Olive AP offer; and that protection for schools against rising energy costs was available through the capping mechanism.

In response to a member's question it was confirmed that the maintained schools additional grant would not be subject to high needs block transfer.

### Funding Formula

Following adjustments for block transfers, £446.98m would be available for school allocation. Calculations for allocations would consider sparsity, exceptional premises factors, private finance initiatives, separate sites, business rates, and primary school retrospective adjustments.

The funding formula would be approved by the Children and Young People Committee on Tuesday 17 January 2023.

With regard to the Schools Funding Formula, members understood that the 1% transfer to the high needs block was still scheduled to continue for four years as the safety valve proposal had not yet been agreed. However, inflation and new pressures may affect the transfer percentage. This would be considered by the Schools Forum in March, in which a further breakdown and justification of the high needs block spend would be reviewed

### Education Functions and De-Delegations

Rates for supporting maintained schools would remain the same and the officer expanded upon ways in which this spending was used.

Individual members raised the following points in relation to education functions and de-delegations;

- Thanked officers for providing information on services and requested this was included on the autumn agenda for primary heads.
- Confirmed that the price per pupil head for maintained schools and trade unions would be reconsidered in future.

### High Needs Block

High needs block transfers would be considered by the forum in March. A £13.5m overspend was anticipated with a £51m deficit at year-end. Pending release of the green paper, the mandatory override had been agreed and therefore this would be removed from the local authority's bottom line.

### Central Schools Services Block

National copyright license arrangements had increased due to increase in pupil numbers. The residual balance had changed to reflect this.

## Early Years

Increases to early years figures would go directly to providers. However, there were still significant cost pressures with intense salary competition in Cambridge City. Centrally retained funding was expected to remain at 3% for 2023/24. There was a reduction in the special educational needs inclusion fund (SENIF) as it had not been spent in the previous year.

Individual members raised the following points in relation to early years;

- Clarified that the reduction in finances for early year and childcare qualifications was due to a reduction in contract price and would not impact upon delivery.
- Noted that the SENIF for two year olds was needs led and could be readjusted if required, however, it had reduced for 2023/24 as resource granted had not been utilised in the previous year.

## Next Steps

Mainstream school additional funding allocations would be checked against the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) calculator. It was anticipated notification of initial growth fund allocations would occur in early February. The authority hoped to set the methodology for budget setting earlier next year and any member feedback given with regards to timing would be considered.

It was resolved to:

## Schools Funding Formula

- a) Schools Forum are asked to note and comment on the final schools funding formula proposals following the December announcements.

## Education Functions and De-Delegations – Maintained Primary only

- b) Maintained Primary School representatives on Schools Forum are asked to approve:
  - i. The continued retention of £10 per pupil from maintained schools for services specifically provided to maintained schools.
  - ii. The continuation of the de-delegation in respect of Contingency.
  - iii. The continuation of the de-delegation in respect of Free School Meals Eligibility.
  - iv. The continuation of the de-delegation in respect of Maternity and Paternity Cover.

- v. The continuation of the de-delegation in respect of Trade Union Facilities Time.

### High Needs Block

- c) Schools Forum are asked to note and comment on the high needs block following the December announcements.

### Central Schools Services Block

- d) Schools Forum are asked to note and comment on the final central schools services block proposals following the December announcements.

### Early Years

- e) Schools Forum are asked to note and comment on the final early years block proposals following the December announcements.
- f) Schools Forum are asked to approve the early years centrally retained funding amounts for 2023/24.

## 41. Agenda Plan – January 2023

The meeting scheduled 24 February 2023 was cancelled by consent of the forum.

It was resolved to:

Note the agenda plan.

## 42. Any Other Business

No other items of business were raised.

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