

CAMBRIDGESHIRE SCHOOLS FORUM: MINUTES

Date: Friday 18th January 2019

Time: 10:00am – 11:00am

Place: Kreis Viersen Room, Shire Hall, Cambridge

Present: P Hodgson (Chairman), Dr A Rodger (Vice-Chairman), L Callow, J Culpin, S Connell, T Davies, J Digby, A Goulding, J Horn, J Lloyd, D Parfitt, P Stratford, A Reeder, R Spencer, P Stratford, Dr K Taylor OBE and R Waldau

Observers

Councillor J Whitehead	Cambridgeshire County Council
J Duveen	Teacher Unions
A Rutterford-Dufferty	Diocese of Ely

Officers

J Lee, J Lewis, N Mills, R Sanderson, S Surtees and M Wade

Apologies: S Blythe, A Matthews, J North, P Peres, A Reed, S Roscoe, Cllr S Bywater and Cllr P Downes

91. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies were received from S Blythe, A Matthews, J North, P Peres, A Reed, S Roscoe, Cllr S Bywater and Cllr P Downes. The Forum was informed that Sue Blythe and Jackie North had resigned from their seats on the Forum and that the process of finding replacements was underway.

There were no declarations of interest.

92. MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON 14TH DECEMBER 2018

The minutes of the meeting on 14th December 2018 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

93. ACTION LOG

The Action Log was reviewed and various updates were provided by the Service Director of Education.

With regard to Minute 76 and concerns about the overspend and home tuition in the High Needs Block, members were reminded that the main focus of the upcoming Forum working group session on February 1st 2019 would be to tackle these issues and that further information would be provided at the working group. It was noted that in December Government had allocated an extra £1.4m to the local authority for the High Needs Block in 2018-19 and the same amount for 2019-20, as part of £150m that had been distributed to authorities across the country on the basis of pupil numbers. Members were invited to consider setting this additional money aside for investment in transformation as opposed to simply using it to reduce the £7.5m overspend deficit, in order to finance real change,

rather than continue the current cycle of rising costs and demand being met by lower funding.

In discussing this proposal, members:

- Acknowledged that the working group would need to establish firm actions regarding the use of the funding to reduce demand on the High Needs Block, to justify using the additional funds in this way following the previous injections of additional funding that the sector had received. There would also need to be demonstrable, measurable savings from the investment to justify the course of action proposed. It was noted that the working group would be open to all members of the Forum, but not to the public.
- Suggested that the money could go towards trying to keep children from leaving the county for their education, although it was noted that £1.4m might not be enough for such a task and that it often took many years before identifiable outcomes could be gauged.
- Sought and received assurances that the £1.4m would not be used to create new posts within the local authority
- Agreed that a wide variety of sectors should have input to the discussion.
- Expressed concern over the reaction that Maintained Schools might have to hearing that the High Needs Block was receiving £1.4m in extra funding that was not to be distributed, after the Block had already received £1.7m from the Schools Block. It was suggested that spreading a message of sustainable change was important, as well as the need to reduce the likelihood of being required to ask for £1.7m from the Schools Block on a recurring basis.
- Clarified that there were no caveats from the Department for Education on how the money should be spent, other than that it was required to go towards the High Needs Block.

With regard to Minute 82, Forum was reminded that as of this meeting, members who failed to attend three consecutive meetings would have their appointment removed and a replacement sought, although it was noted that a substitute could attend on their behalf to avoid such a situation. It was clarified that this did not apply to observers, as their attendance did not affect the quorum and they did not have voting rights.

With regard to Minute 86, a letter from Cllr Simon Bywater was tabled at the meeting, included in these minutes as **Appendix A**. This relayed the response that having held a discussion with the Leader of the Council, Cllr Count, it was confirmed that the Council would not be able to accept the Forum's proposal of an increase in Council Tax rates in order to provide extra funds for the Higher Needs Block.

94. SCHOOL ADMISSION APPEAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR ALL ADMISSION AUTHORITIES FINANCIAL YEAR 2019-20 ONWARDS

The Forum received a report advising it of the need to change the way in which the cost associated with the provision of Schools Admission appeals was funded in response to revisions contained within the 2018-19 schools revenue funding operational guidance issued by the Department for Education (DfE). This detailed the changes in funding and requirements for school admission appeals from 2019-20 onwards which suggested that it

might no longer be possible to differentiate between own admission authority schools and those for which the local authority was the admissions authority.

Three options were presented by officers for the Forum to consider, with the officer recommendation being for the Council to provide the appeals service free of charge to all schools, including Own Admission Authority Schools for whom the Authority currently charged for the service. It was noted that all authorities were currently confronting the same issue and that 'Option 1' was preferred to enable the continuation of a robust and independent service and avoid potential challenge from the DfE.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Note the contents of the report.
- b) Approve the increase in funding to the admissions service from the Central School Services Block to support the delivery of school admission appeals for all Cambridgeshire.

95. 2019-20 SCHOOLS FUNDING FORMULA

The Forum received an update report on the Cambridgeshire schools funding formula for 2019/20 following the publication of the Dedicated Schools Grant allocations by the Department for Education which had only taken place on 17th December. Apologies were given for the late publication of the report but, as stated, due to the timing of the announcement there had been little time to make what were substantial changes over the Christmas period due to officer leave and it was considered more important to ensure the report provided the most accurate information possible. The Children and Young People Committee (CYP) had this year received a similar paper three days prior to the Forum meeting.

In presenting the report, Forum was informed that, as laid out in the paper, there was £345m to be allocated through the funding formula. Attention was drawn to the £3.6m that would be over-allocated if mirroring the national formula, as indicated in Section 4.4 of the report. While trying to adhere to the formula as much as possible, it was necessary to make some adjustments to remove the over-allocation. It was noted that however this was achieved, a negative impact would be felt somewhere and CYP had looked at the options presented in the paper and had decided on Option 3. It was acknowledged that the Forum normally considered the formula before it was approved by CYP but unfortunately the dates had not aligned in the current year, meaning that the Forum could only comment on the contents of the report as CYP had already made the decision. A later report on the agenda on proposed dates sought to ensure this did not happen next year with the proposed January date for Forum being before CYP to ensure Forum's views could be reported on and considered when CYP make the final decision.

In discussing the report:

- It was clarified that schools with falling rolls would lose out on funding based on pupil numbers and also potentially on the per pupil funding. It was noted that the lack of protection against falling rolls was a national challenge to the formula.
- It was highlighted that a fluctuation in pupil numbers this year, with a minimal net change in primary numbers, disguised significant losses and gains in various schools, with a bulge starting to occur in secondary schools.

- Clarification was sought over the difference in funding and how much was spent, noting that the Growth Fund requirement from the authority was £5m, with Government giving only £3.3m. It was acknowledged that the National Formula had consistently failed to adequately fund new schools that went on to reach capacity. Forum was told that an initial analysis on this situation would be carried out and presented to the Forum in March, in order to consider presenting the evidence to Government later in the year.
Action required: Martin Wade LGSS Strategic Finance Business Partner
- Queries were raised on how soon indicative budgets could be provided, given that the loss of tens of thousands of pounds would shock many schools as they prepared their already tight budgets for September 2019 on the assumption that they would have roughly the same amounts as the previous year. Members were informed that once the figures had been confirmed, information would be provided to schools and that this was likely to occur in early to mid-February. It was also confirmed that the indicative budgets could be circulated to teacher unions. It was proposed to put some draft figures together as soon as possible to send to schools in order for them to be able carry out their own calculations to estimate any potential loss. **Action required: Jon Lewis Service Director: Education**
- Attention was drawn to the need to consider the impact on workers at the bottom of the pay scale, including those on the minimum wage, along with the need for consultations to be undertaken with teacher unions. Concern was expressed that the table in Section 4.9 of the report suggested that around 40% of schools would be faced with redundancies in the next year due to the identified reduced funding.

It was resolved unanimously to:

Note the report.

96. PROPOSED FUTURE SCHOOLS FORUM DATES AFTER JULY 2019

As the last current meeting of Forum was in July, a report was received with proposed dates for meetings during the next school year further (August 2019 – July 2020).

In discussion Forum members agreed that there was currently no necessity for a meeting in November, highlighting that, if required, further meetings could be added to the schedule at a later date. It was noted that Democratic Services would set up the meetings agreed by the Forum and circulate information to all members. **Action required: Democratic Services**

It was resolved unanimously to:

Agree the following dates for Forum as follows:

Wednesday 16th October

Wednesday 18th December

Friday 17th January 2020

Friday 27th March 2020

Friday 15th May 2020

Friday 17th July 2020

97. AGENDA PLAN

Members requested that if practicable information be provided at the forthcoming Forum

workshop on 1st February, regarding the percentage of appeals that involved children with Special Education Needs (SEN) and whether it would be possible to have a separate funding arrangement for that sector if it was shown to be over-represented.

As clarification, it was noted that the school admission appeals process did not involve children with SEN. However, the lead officer indicated that she would provide information on the number of cases that went to tribunals in discussion with colleagues in SEN services. **Action required: Sam Surtees Strategic Admissions and Attendance Manager**

With the addition of a report to come forward to the meeting on March 29th on problems related to the national funding formula, it was resolved to:

Note the Agenda Plan

98. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Cambridgeshire Schools Forum will meet next on Friday 29th March 2019 at 10:00am in the Kreis Viersen Room, Shire Hall, Cambridge.

The next workshop will be held on Friday 1st February 2019 at 10:00am in Room 128, Shire Hall, Cambridge.

Chairman
29th March 2019

My ref: SB SF Funding
Your ref:
Date: 17th January 2019



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To Members of Schools Forum

Further to the Schools Forum meeting of the 14th December when the request was made to consider a council tax increase to fund the high need block pressures, I have had an opportunity to discuss this situation with Steve Count, Leader of Cambridgeshire County Council. We fully appreciate the challenges that are being faced but the council faces significant challenges -

- Funding for council services have been reduced dramatically over time. 2018/19 will see a further 13.2% reduction in our revenue support grant from the Department of Communities and Local Government.
- We have significant pressure on service demand including support for children in the care system and a rising demography for adult social care. Despite additional funding from government in these areas, huge pressures remain in our funding.
- The impact of the high needs pressure has had significant implications upon council funded budgets outside of the high needs block including educational psychology, the statutory assessment team and home to school transport. Despite our budget challenges, we have had to invest around £1.8m into special school transport in 2019/20 to meet the current overspend in this area and the expected demographic demand.
- In light of the latest information on budget pressures and the outcome of the funding settlement, we are projecting a remaining budget gap for 19-20 of £13.1m and substantial gaps in the next four years. The overall position is shown in the table below which will be considered by our General Purposes Committee (GPC) next week -

	2019-20 £'000	2020-21 £'000	2021-22 £'000	2022-23 £'000	2023-24 £'000	Total £'000
Total Saving Requirement	27,354	19,910	11,045	7,200	4,643	70,152
Identified Savings	-12,442	-8,978	-905	736*	306*	-21,271
Identified additional Income Generation	-1,778	502*	-5,791	99*	195*	5,741
Residual Savings to be identified	13,134	11,434	4,349	8,035	5,144	42,096

*Positive figures represent a reversal of savings/investments from previous years.

The savings/income target for 2019-20 is £27.4m with more than £70m required over the next five years.

The Council Tax referendum level has recently been confirmed as 2.99% in 2019-20 in addition to the Adult Social Care precept. The Business Plan currently assumes that core Council Tax will rise by 1.99% in 2019-20. The Council therefore now has the option to raise Council Tax by a further 1% which could raise an additional £2.728m income. When considering any increases in Council Tax, Council must strive to balance its powers to raise revenue against the demands that places on the population it strives to serve. That decision will be made by full Council February 5th 2019. The report also contains a number of other potential options to close the gap for 19/20, but obviously given the scale of the ongoing gaps in future years the use of core funding to meet DSG pressures cannot be considered at this stage.

The pressures we face together are significantly and we need to work together to resolve these issues. Cambridgeshire County Council, like it schools believe they are unfairly funded by central Government due to unfair national formulas, and have been actively campaigning through the fairer funding campaign to deliver more central Government funding in this area. We hope you recognise the efforts we have made in terms of, not just our funding but for education as well. Officers are fully committed to try and find pragmatic solutions to ensure we achieve a level of financial balance on the high needs block, without impacting children and being sensitive of the challenging financial position for schools. It is important we work together to continue to petition government to address these challenges, the majority of which need to be addressed by government including formulae and SEND policy.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several fluid, overlapping strokes that form a cursive-style name.

Cllr Simon Bywater

Chair Children and Young People Committee