

CAMBRIDGESHIRE SCHOOLS FORUM: UNAPPROVED MINUTES

Date: Friday 24 June 2016

Time: 10.00am – 11.45am

Place: Kreis Viersen Room, Shire Hall, Cambridge

Present: P Hodgson (Chairman), Dr A Rodger (Vice Chairman), L Calow, M Carter, S Connell, J Culpin, T Davies, A Matthews, J North, D Parfitt, A Reeder, B Smethurst, Dr K Taylor, R Waldau, M Woods.

Observers

Councillor P Downes	Cambridgeshire County Council
Councillor D Harty	Cambridgeshire County Council
G Fewtrell	Teachers' Union

Officers

K Grimwade, M Teasdale, Dr H Phelan (Item 6), M Wade, R Greenhill, R Yule (Items 1- 6).

Apologies: Forum Members: S Blyth, K Evans, A Hutchinson (substituted by M Carter)
Others: S Tinsley, M Moore.

ACTION

135. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN/ CHAIRWOMAN AND VICE CHAIRMAN/ CHAIRWOMAN

Philip Hodgson (Governor representative) was re-appointed as chairman by unanimous consent, nominated by Barry Smethurst (Governor representative) and seconded by Dr Kim Taylor (Special School Academies representative).

Dr Alan Rodger was re-appointed as vice-chairman by unanimous consent, nominated by Barry Smethurst (Governor representative) and seconded by Dr Kim Taylor (Special School Academies representative).

136. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The Clerk reported apologies for absence from Sue Blyth, Kate Evans and Andrew Hutchinson (substituted by Miles Carter).

137. MINUTES

The minutes of the extraordinary meeting held on 13 April 2016 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

The following outcomes of actions arising from that meeting were noted:

(a) Minute 130 (d): Special Educational Needs (SEND) Action Plan

The Service Director for Strategy and Commissioning had circulated details of actions already taken and further actions planned in relation to the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS). A further update was included at Item 8 below.

(b) Dr K Taylor (Special School Academies' representative) had agreed to investigate the alignment of the Special Educational Needs (SEND) Action Plan 2016-2020 with the Cambridgeshire SEND Strategy 2012-16.

Dr Taylor outlined a number of concerns including:

- i. Whether the three strategic priorities set out in the Strategy for Children and Young People with SEN and Disability 2012-16 continued to be overarching for subsequent Action Plans on the Local Offer;
- ii. The lack of a formal launch of the latest action plan;
- iii. The importance of schools and academies knowing and understanding the strategic plans and action plans in order for them to support the Local Offer for Cambridgeshire;
- iv. The importance of publicising this information to all interested parties including parents and ensuring that partner organisations within the health and social care sectors were aware of the actions placed on them.

The Service Director for Strategy and Commissioning acknowledged the value of clear guidance in this area and said that she was happy to take up these points in forthcoming meetings with partner organisations. The Service Director for Learning said that work was in hand on an overall school improvement strategy. This would go to the Children and Young People Committee's Spokes meeting on 2 August 2016 with a view to going out for consultation early in the next school year.

(c) Minute 132: National Funding Formula Consultation Stage 1: Draft Response Question 18

The Director for Learning said that examples of good practice in relation to children from military families were currently being collated into a best practice guide. It was hoped that this would be ready for distribution in time for the start of the autumn term. **A copy would be sent to Forum members for information.**

**Service
Director for
Learning**

138. NATIONAL FUNDING FORMULA

The Strategic Finance Manager (Children and Schools) said that no

announcement had yet been made in relation to the National Funding Formula, but the Department for Education (DfE) had recently confirmed that the commitment to delivering fair funding in 2017/18 remained in place. Concerns about the timescale for consultation had been fed back to central government, but it might be necessary to convene a workshop at short notice in order to consult with members. The timing of this would be dependent on the announcement of the formula, but it could potentially take place during the week commencing 18 July 2016.

There were currently no significant local funding formula changes planned for the period 2017/18 onward, although this might need to be revisited once the next stages and timescales of the National Funding Formula were known.

139. MAINTAINED SCHOOLS AND DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT (DSG) FINANCIAL HEALTH

The Strategic Finance Manager (Children and Schools) introduced an analysis of the 2015/16 final closing balance position of maintained schools and the overall Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) as at 31 March 2016 and highlighted the following points:

- i. The figures contained in the report were based on year-end returns from schools, but these were subject to further validation of the Consistent Financial Reporting (CFR) returns. The final information on schools' balances published by the Department for Education (DfE) might therefore differ slightly from the figures shown;
- ii. Overall balances for primary schools and nursery schools had increased in the 12 months from March 2015;
- iii. 176 schools were holding surplus revenue balances, of which forty four held sums defined as an excessive balance using the revised criteria agreed by the Schools Forum in April 2011. It was noted that some of these schools had planned expenditure during 2016/17 which would reduce the sums held. The figures would be reviewed mid-year and the outcome reported to the Forum;
- iv. Four schools (three primary schools and one special school) had reported a deficit revenue balance. Each of these had submitted a deficit recovery plan for 2016/17;
- v. There were growing concerns within the maintained nursery sector about on-going viability;
- vi. All maintained schools had submitted their Schools Financial Value Standard (SFVS) returns by the 31 March 2016 deadline;
- vii. The DSG carry forward to 2016/17 was down by almost £2,000,000 compared to the end of the 2015/16 period. This was primarily due to:
 - On-going commitments to Early Years 2 Year Old projects;

- Additional support to the growth fund;
 - Funding of a primary social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) pilot;
 - Pressures within the High Needs Block (pupils with Statements of Special Educational Needs or Education Health and Care Plans);
 - Pressures in Special Educational Needs (SEN) Placements and Out of School tuition budgets;
 - Significant increases in rates for schools following the rateable values review.
- viii. **An update on DSG spend would be included as a standing item on the Schools Forum agenda from October 2016 onward and would include a mid-year update on the use of DSG carry forward.**

**Democratic
Services/
Strategic
Finance
Manager**

The following points were raised in discussion of the report:

- Some concern was expressed at the overall increase in primary school revenue balances and an assurance was sought that schools in special measures and those attracting pupil premium payments were using their resources efficiently to best meet the needs of their pupils and not holding large reserves. The Director for Learning confirmed that officers supporting such schools would always consider this issue when looking at the profile of expenditure in relation to budget and reserves. **However, he was happy to check that the net local authority budget was not contributing to any surplus.**
- The volatility of funding levels meant that maintaining a reasonable carry-forward of funds was one way in which schools sought to ensure that support was available in future years for their most vulnerable pupils;
- Building adaptations required by children with some special educational needs involved significant costs which schools might save for over a number of years;
- Pupil and admission numbers were particularly volatile within the special school sector which impacted on budget management;
- It would be helpful if the maintained school revenue balances shown at Appendix 1 also indicated what percentage of the school's overall budget this sum represented. **It was agreed to add this information to the table and re-circulate it to members.**
- The Strategic Finance Manager (Children and Schools) confirmed that differences between actual spend and funding allocations described in the baseline exercise in the appendix to the minutes of the meeting on 13 April 2016 were a technical adjustment and that there had been no reduction in funds;

**Service
Director for
Learning**

**Strategic
Finance
Manager**

- The Director for Learning confirmed that officers would actively engage with any school where there were concerns that it was not spending its budget in the best interests of its pupils and that if necessary restrictions on expenditure could be put in place;
- Information on the carry-forward of funds by academies should be available on their individual websites or from Companies House, but officers were not aware of these being collated centrally;
- There was no requirement for academies to complete an annual Schools Financial Value Standard (SFVS) return, but academies' representatives said that their financial management practices were subject to stringent scrutiny by the Department for Education, both internal and external audit on an annual basis and the requirement to lodge annual returns at Companies House;
- The importance of the quality of governance arrangements in relation to both maintained schools and academies;
- Clarification was sought of the position in relation to the carry-over of funds to meet the cost of possible future redundancies. The Director for Learning said that the expectation was that schools would manage the cost of redundancies from within their own budget, but that a small central budget was available to mitigate the cost of unavoidable and unaffordable redundancies. **He undertook to re-circulate details of this.**

**Service
Director for
Learning**

It was resolved to:

- **Note the content of the report;**
- **Approve the planned use of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) carry-forward as described in paragraph 6.4.**

140. PILOT TO SUPPORT PRIMARY AGED PUPILS WITH SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL AND MENTAL HEALTH (SEMH) DIFFICULTIES: PROGRESS REPORT

The Head of Special Educational Needs (SEND) Specialist Services and Principal Educational Psychologist noted that the Schools Forum had allocated one-off funding for projects in Cambridge and Wisbech to look at how best to meet the needs of young children experiencing social, emotional and behavioural difficulties following an increase in the number of permanent exclusions of primary school pupils.

Special Educational Needs (SEND) Specialist Services had sponsored both projects and was responsible for running the project in Cambridge. The Wisbech project was being run by Wisbech head teachers and the Ready2 Learn Project with support from the Tri-Borough Alternative Provision (TBAP) and SEND Specialist Services. There was also £95,000 within the allocated budget to fund a countywide training

programme for teaching assistants and this would be rolled out from September 2016.

The following points were raised in discussion:

- To date there had been three permanent exclusions of primary aged children during the current school year which represented a significant decrease over previous years and compared favourably to other nearby local authorities;
- Initial findings indicated progress for the children involved in the project, especially at the Cambridge site;
- A robust evaluation framework was in place with both qualitative and quantitative data being obtained;
- The outcomes of the Educational Excellence Everywhere White Paper (March 2016) which set out proposals to reform alternative provision and the National Funding Formula would both have a significant bearing on future planning and provision;
- Whether the project indicated a strategy shift from centralised support in specialist school and alternative provisions to more local support. The Service Director for Strategy and Commissioning said that the SEND commissioning strategy took a pragmatic approach to meeting the growing demand on specialist places within the funding available;
- Information about how successfully children involved in the project were integrated back into mainstream school would not be available by October 2016 when it was intended to submit a further project evaluation and future business case;
- Some members perceived a lack of clarity about the pathway for assessing and responding to the needs of children demonstrating SEMH difficulties;
- The difficulty in accurately evaluating the project based on a small number of children with such varied and individual needs.

The Chairman thanked the Head of Special Educational Needs (SEND) Specialist Services and Principal Educational Psychologist for her report and response to questions. He noted that a further evaluation report and business case outlining possible models of support and funding options would be brought the Forum's October meeting.

141. COMPOSITION OF CAMBRIDGESHIRE SCHOOLS FORUM: UPDATE

The Clerk provided an update on recent appointments and discussions with constituent groups in response to the need to review the Forum's composition in order to comply with the requirements of The Schools Forums (England) Regulations 2012 and the Schools Forum and Operational Good Practice Guide.

It was resolved that:

No further action would be taken at this stage in the light of current uncertainty regarding future arrangements for Schools Forums. **This position would be reviewed if future arrangements for Schools Forums were not clarified when an announcement was made on the National Funding Formula.**

**Democratic
Services**

142. CHILD AND ADOLESCENT MENTAL HEALTH (CAMH): UPDATE

The Service Director for Strategy and Commissioning noted the concerns expressed at the Schools Forum meeting on 16 January 2016 about reduced resources available for CAMH services in Cambridgeshire and the impact of this on waiting times for specialist mental health assessments. She reported that:

- Additional funding had been targeted at this area and the waiting list for autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) assessments had been re-opened and waiting times were now below eighteen weeks which was within NHS guidelines;
- The local CAMHS Transformation Plan had been approved by NHS England in November 2015 which meant an additional £1,500,000 per year would be available to support better access to CAMHS and Eating Disorder services;
- Work was in hand to change from a tier service delivery model to the nationally designed ITHRIVE framework which focused on a social rather than medical model and targeted areas of greatest need through early intervention and prevention strategies. It was intended to begin implementation of ITHRIVE in September 2017 and the Forum would be provided with further details in due course once the model had been further refined.
- Positive feedback had been received from a number of focus groups that had been held for the parents of children experiencing social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.
Details would be circulated to members for information.

**Service Director,
Strategy and
Commissioning**

The following points were raised in discussion of the report:

- The increase in incidents of self-harm known to some Forum members which had financial cost implications for schools in addition to the physical and emotional cost to pupils and families;
- The growing pressures relating to children with co-existing learning difficulties or disabilities and social, emotional and behavioural needs.

The Forum noted the update on CAMH, as set out at Appendix A

143. FORWARD PLAN

The forward plan was noted.

The Strategic Finance Manager said that centrally held funds relating to the Cambridgeshire Public Services Network (CPSN) might in future be delegated. A series of workshops were being held to encourage potential buy-in by schools and any input from Forum members would be very welcome.

144. ASSESSMENT FROM SUB-GROUP MEETINGS AND FEEDBACK FROM HEADTEACHERS' STEERING GROUPS

No reports were received.

145. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

The next planned meeting would be held on Friday 14 October 2016 at 10.00am in the Kreis Viersen Room, Shire Hall, Cambridge. The Chairman advised members that Heidi Allen MP was planning to attend the meeting as an observer.

The Chairman noted that this would be Jonathan Culpin's last meeting and thanked him for his input as a one of the Forum's secondary school academy representatives. Mr Culpin offered his thanks to officers.

Chairman
(14 October 2016)