

CAMBRIDGESHIRE SCHOOLS FORUM: MINUTES

Date: Wednesday 14 December 2016

Time: 10.00am – 12.30pm

Place: Kreis Viersen Room, Shire Hall, Cambridge

Present: P Hodgson (Chairman), Dr A Rodger (Vice Chairman), D Parfitt, L Calow, K Coates, S Connell, J Digby, T Davies, A Matthews, B Smethurst, Dr K Taylor, S Tinsley and R Waldau.

Observers

G Fewtrell

Councillor P Downes

Teachers' Union

Cambridgeshire County Council

Officers

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

Apologies: Forum Members: S Blyth, K Evans, A Hutchinson, N Jones and J North
Observers: Councillors D Harty and J Whitehead
Officers: M Teasdale

ACTION

157. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND ORDER OF BUSINESS

The Clerk reported apologies for absence and substitutions as recorded above.

The Chairman informed the Forum of his intention to vary the order of business from the published agenda to take Item 6, a presentation on the High Needs Block, as the fourth item on the agenda so that it could inform discussion of subsequent items.

158. MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON 14 OCTOBER 2016

The minutes of the meeting on 14 October 2016 were confirmed by those present to be a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

The following outcomes of actions arising from previous meetings were noted:

(a) Minute 141: Composition of Cambridgeshire Schools Forum – Update

Deferred due to pressure of business on the December agenda.

(b) Minute 142: Child and Adolescent Mental Health (CAMH): Update

Information covered under Minute 163 below, Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) Pilot Scheme Evaluation.

**Democratic
Services
Officer**

(c) Minute 148: Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Peer Review

The Peer Review's final report would be shared with the offices of local Members of Parliament with an offer to discuss the findings further if they wished.

(d) Minute 148: Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Peer Review

A copy of the paper submitted to the Children and Young People Policy and Service Committee in January to be copied to members of the Forum for information.

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(e) Minute 149: Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) Financial Position 2016-17

The Vice Chairman met with officers on 8 December 2016 to discuss the position.

(f) Minute 150: National Funding Formula and Schools Budget Setting 2017-18 Update

The level of per capita expenditure on the Admissions Service for maintained schools in Cambridgeshire was relatively low compared to the county's geographical and statistical neighbours. A disapplication from the Secretary of State was required to increase the amount.

(g) Minute 150: National Funding Formula and Schools Budget Setting 2017-18 Update

Section 106 money did not include children who crossed county borders to attend school.

(h) Minute 150: National Funding Formula and Schools Budget Setting 2017-18 Update

Copies of the Vice Chairman's correspondence with the Prime Minister and officials about the particular pressures faced by Cambridgeshire's schools were circulated to members by email on 5 December 2016.

159. NATIONAL FUNDING FORMULA AND SCHOOLS BUDGET SETTING 2017-18: UPDATE

The Strategic Finance Manager (Children and Schools) introduced a report which provided an update on local schools budget setting issues. It was noted that an announcement on the National Funding Formula Consultation was expected later that day from the Department for Education (DfE). The response to the consultation would be discussed at the Forum's meeting in January and a working group would be established in advance.

The following points were raised in discussion:

- As previously reported, the increase in Schools Block per Pupil allocation was a technical adjustment and did not represent new money;
- Pupil numbers overall within Cambridgeshire continued to grow, although this masked some quite significant variations in individual schools within both the primary and secondary sectors;
- Approval was sought to increase the Growth Fund by £0.5m in 2017-18 to £2.5m to meet additional demand and the costs associated with the opening of two new primary schools, one secondary school and one special school in this period;
- Growth funding was based on assessed need and often delivered at a flat rate rather than on a per pupil basis so there would be very few cases of it funding unfilled places;
- No changes were proposed to the local funding formula;
- No announcements had been made yet in relation to pupils with English as an Additional Language (EAL);
- Final decisions on Schools Budget Setting would be taken by the Children and Young People Policy and Service Committee (CYP) on 17 January 2017 and would be reported back when the Forum met next on 27 January 2017;
- A reduction of £1.8m in the Education Services Grant (ESG) had already been factored into the overall levels of funding available as part of the Local Authority's (LA) business planning process;
- Maintained schools' members accepted officers' advice that a decision not to approve the retention of £10 per pupil to reflect the removal of ESG general duties would mean that the Local Authority would be unable to deliver the relevant functions to maintained schools in 2017-18. They acknowledged that officers had only recently received the information from the DfE on which this figure was based, but expressed strong concern that they were required to take this decision on behalf of all maintained schools without prior notice or time to consult with colleagues;
- The LA was reviewing the services provided from within the retained duties rate element of the ESG as it already spent more delivering these services than was covered by the sum retained;
- The Vice Chairman emphasised that, against the background of wider financial pressures on both local and central government, budget would be cut and that it was imperative that the funds which were available were used as efficiently and effectively as possible. The Director of Learning reported that a review of the LA's role in education was in taking place which would include exploring and seeking to clarify the relationship and boundaries between schools and the LA. The Schools Forum would be consulted as part of this review and a report would be submitted to CYP in March 2017;
- The DfE was drawing up a list of approved functions which could be managed through centrally retained funding. Tree

- maintenance was the only item which had been removed from the 2017-18 proposals;
- An additional member of staff had been taken on and staff overtime approved to address the backlog which had developed in school admissions. These costs had been accommodated by the Local Authority and a number of issues of process were also being addressed in order to further improve efficiency. However, any proposal to increase the centrally retained budget relating to the Admissions Service would require disapplication by the Secretary of State. Given the increasing number of applications being processed and the expectation of hard boundaries being put in place between funding blocks from April 2017 it would be important to consider how this would be managed going forward. **The Forum would welcome officers' advice on this;**
 - Tony Davies reported that a survey of Cambridgeshire Primary Heads had resulted in a vote in favour of continuing to include the Cambridgeshire Race Equality Advisory Service (CREDS) within the proposed de-delegations for the next financial year, but to note that the position might change beyond that point;
 - The DfE had published a response to its consultation on Early Years funding. This recognised the increased costs incurred by maintained nurseries and contained a commitment to supplementary funding for the next three years. At local level a consultation on the Early Years Single Funding Formula (EYSFF) would be published before the end of term and a report would be submitted to the Forum's meeting in January 2017;
 - A working party on Fair Funding would be held on Wednesday 11 January. **Representation would be agreed with officers outside of the meeting.**

**Service Director,
Strategy and
Commissioning**

**Strategic
Finance
Manager**

It was resolved:

1. By majority, to approve the increase of the Growth Fund from £2m to £2.5m;
2. To approve the retention of £15 per pupil to reflect the transfer of the Education Services Grant (ESG) retained duties funding and functions delivered by the Local Authority for all schools;
3. By Maintained Schools' Members of the Schools Forum, to approve with reluctance the retention of £10 per pupil to reflect the removal of ESG general duties funding and functions delivered by the Local Authority for maintained schools;
4. To approve the continued Central Expenditure as set out in paragraphs 6.5 and 6.6 of the report;
5. By Maintained Schools' Members of the Schools Forum, to agree to the continuation of the de-delegations in respect of:
 - Contingency
 - The Cambridgeshire Race Equality Advisory Service (CREDS)
 - Free School Meals (FSM) Eligibility
 - Insurance

- Maternity
- Trade Union Facilities Time.

160. HIGH NEEDS BLOCK

The Forum received a presentation by the Head of Commissioning Enhanced Services, the Head of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Specialist Services and the Strategic Finance Manager (Children and Schools) setting out the current position on the High Needs Block and looking at managing the pressures in this area going forward. A copy of the presentation is attached at Appendix A:

The following points were noted in discussion:

- At present Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) carry forward was being used to meet in-year pressures, but this was not sustainable going forward. Confirmation was still awaited from the DfE of any uplift in funding to the High Needs Block;
- Pressures in 2016-17 included the spot place purchase of special school places, the higher number of students with special educational needs who were remaining in education beyond the age of 16 and the longer periods of time which pupils with special needs were receiving out of school tuition. It was estimated that the cost of these and other pressures would rise to £3m in the next financial year. Measures had been identified to absorb £0.75m of these costs leaving a remaining pressure of £2.25m;
- In line with national trends the percentage of pupils in Cambridgeshire with special educational needs and disabilities was decreasing. However, also in line with national trends the percentage of pupils with the highest levels of need (those with either a statement of special educational need or an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP)) had increased since 2010 and was expected to continue to increase during the next two to three years;
- An increasing number of children and young people were being diagnosed with genetic or chromosomal disorders which could present as varying types and levels of need;
- The number of children with additional needs below the threshold for an EHCP placed pressure on schools and might in part explain the reluctance of some schools to accept more children with SEND;
- Early Years representatives emphasised the value of early intervention and preventative work to many children with SEND, but expressed concern at how this would be funded;
- The Vice Chairman suggested that the Local Authority and schools needed to work together over the next year to better understand and manage the expectations which existed on both sides in order to deliver the best outcomes possible to pupils, their families and schools within the funds available;

- Concern was expressed at the potential impact of cuts to main budgets in favour of the High Needs Block on those children with additional needs below the threshold required to obtain additional support;
- Members acknowledged that officers had been waiting on information from central government in order to finalise the detail of the proposals, but would have found it useful to have had a summary of the key decisions to be made in advance of the meeting in order for these to be shared with colleagues and a collective view taken;
- The final decision on the proposed transfer between funding blocks rested with CYP. However, to date the Committee had never gone against the recommendation of the Schools Forum;
- All present noted the real term implications of the difficult choices which were having to be made in relation to budgets and the impact these would have on schools and pupils.

In light of the discussion it was resolved:

1. To endorse with reluctance the proposed transfer of up to £2.25m to accommodate pressures on the High Needs Block, less any uplift received from central government, with the commitment that officers would work with schools to minimise this figure.

161. DRAFT REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUSINESS PLANNING PROPOSALS FOR 2017-18 TO 2021-22

It was noted that this report was for information only. The Strategic Finance Manager (Children and Schools) invited members to contact him direct should they have any questions or require more information.

162. SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES PEER REVIEW

The Forum received a report from the Service Director, Strategy and Commissioning, providing an update on the outcome of the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Pilot Peer Review. In her absence the report was introduced by the Director of Learning.

The review had produced some useful and sometimes challenging findings which merited detailed consideration. These would be shared with schools including via the Cambridgeshire Primary Heads Group and the Cambridgeshire School Improvement Board during the next few weeks and it would be important for the Local Authority and schools to work together to address the issues raised. The need to have confidence in the evidence base was highlighted given that strategic decisions would be based upon this. This issue would be explored in detail with the review team.

163. SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL AND MENTAL HEALTH (SEMH) PILOT SCHEME EVALUATION

The Forum received a report by the Head of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Specialist Services providing an evaluation of a pilot scheme to trial alternative provision and assess its impact on reducing permanent exclusions across Cambridgeshire.

The following points were made in discussion:

- Two pilot schemes had been established, one in Cambridge and the other in Wisbech, as these had been identified as the two areas of greatest need in the county;
- 26 primary school aged children had been supported across the two sites at a cost of £15k per child;
- All of the children except two at the Cambridge site had been re-integrated into mainstream schools. 50% of the children at the Wisbech site had been re-integrated so far with the remainder expected to follow in due course;
- There was no new money available to fund the continuation of the project or a further three months so if agreed it would have to be accommodated from within existing resources;
- There would be no costs arising from closing the two projects down if it was decided not to continue;
- One member spoke of the positive outcomes achieved for two of their pupils who had attended the pilot project and would otherwise have been likely to have been permanently excluded. He felt that the project had offered greater value than would have been provided by additional staffing alone;
- Whether schools with pupils attending might contribute to the cost of their places. This would demonstrate financial willingness by both the Forum and schools whilst buying into the service in this way would increase the school's sense of ownership;
- The impact on the attendance rates of the pupils attending the pilot projects was not transformational and the overall results appeared mixed. The evidence base for continued funding was not considered conclusive.

In view of time constraints it was agreed that further consultation would take place outside of the meeting on whether additional funding of £90k should be identified from within existing resources to fund a three month extension of the pilot projects.

**Head of SEND
Specialist
Services/
Strategic
Finance
Manager**

164. PERMANENT EXCLUSIONS AND MANAGED MOVES

Due to time constraints it was agreed that that comments on the report would be circulated outside of the meeting.

**Democratic
Services Officer**

165. SPEECH, LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION NEEDS DELIVERY MODEL

Due to time constraints it was agreed that that comments on the report would be circulated outside of the meeting.

**Democratic
Services Officer**

166. FORWARD PLAN

The Forward Plan was noted.

167. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

The Forum would meet next on Friday 27 January 2017 at 10.00am in the Kreis Viersen Room, Shire Hall, Cambridge.

Chairman