

MINUTES OF CAMBRIDGESHIRE SCHOOLS FORUM

Date: Friday 14th December 2018

Time: 10:05am – 11:50am

Place: Kreis Viersen Room, Shire Hall, Cambridge

Present: P Hodgson (Chairman), Dr A Rodger (Vice-Chairman), L Callow, S Connell, T Davies, J Digby, J Lloyd, A Matthews, S Roscoe, R Spencer (substituting for M Woods), P Stratford, Dr K Taylor OBE and R Waldau

Observers

Councillor S Bywater	Cambridgeshire County Council
Councillor P Downes	Cambridgeshire County Council
Councillor J Whitehead	Cambridgeshire County Council
J Duveen	Teacher Union
J McCamphill	Diocese of Ely

Officers

J Lee, J Lewis, N Mills, R Sanderson, M Wade

Apologies: J North, D Parfitt and M Woods

79. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Chair's announcements

80. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies were received from Jackie North, Deborah Parfitt and Mark Woods.

There were no declarations of interest.

81. MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON 5TH OCTOBER 2018

The minutes of the meeting on 5th October 2018, amended as set out in **Appendix A**, were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

82. 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 (Minute Number 63), an oral update was provided. Further to the previously discussed option of terminating an appointment after a member failed to attend four consecutive meetings, it was suggested that as four meetings amounted to two thirds of the annual total, it was undesirable for any school sector not to be represented in the Forum over such a lengthy period. It was therefore decided that the requirement be

reduced to three consecutive meetings, while it was noted that attendance of any additional meetings would also be included. Members were reminded that arranging a substitute to attend the meeting on their behalf would not count as an absence and they were also urged to send apologies to advise of their inability to attend any meeting. On being put to the vote, it was unanimously agreed to adopt this approach regarding repeated non-attendance at future meetings. **Action required:** Democratic Services

With regard to the collection of data on the High Needs Block (Minute Number 76), the Forum was informed that an updated pack of data would be collated by January and distributed to members. It was suggested that this could be repeated on a quarterly or termly basis and distributed as a note, rather than as a report to be considered by the Forum.

83. SCHOOLS FORUM NEW APPOINTMENTS

The Forum received a report that set out the details of appointments made to current vacancies in the Forum's membership, as well as the replacement of various members. Attention was drawn to the fourth recommendation, which was amended to state that Andrew Read would replace Sarah Conant in the role of observer on the Forum, with the directors of the Diocese of Ely Board of Education / Diocese of Ely Multi Academy Trust acting as his substitutes. The Forum was also informed that the Post 16 Further Education appointment had been made since publication of the report by Jeremy Lloyd, who was present at the meeting.

It was resolved unanimously to note that:

- a) Amanda Morris-Drake has been nominated to represent the Maintained Pupil Referral Unit.
- b) Paul Stratford, the Chair of Governors at Alderman Payne Primary School, having applied, has been accepted to the vacant place on Forum to represent maintained Governors.
- c) Jane Lancaster Adlam, who was the Academy Alternative Provision representative, has been replaced by Sarah Roscoe.
- d) Andrew Read has replaced Sarah Conant as the Diocese of Ely Board of Education / Diocese of Ely Multi Academy Trust observer on the Forum, with Alex Rutterford-Duffety, Jacqueline McCamphill and Amy Weaver as named substitutes.
- e) Jeremy Lloyd has been appointed as the Post 16 Further Education appointment.

84. ACADEMY APPOINTMENTS TO FORUM

The Forum received a report was tabled at the meeting and is attached to the minutes as **Appendix B**, which provided details on academy appointments to the Forum. It was noted that the number of representatives in the Forum had undergone frequent changes and that the report set out a formula to establish a fixed structure. Attention was drawn to the best practice guidance in section 2.1 and it was noted that this allowed the Forum a large amount of discretion in the appointment process, although a minimum of one

representative was required for each group. The Forum was asked to ratify the nominations listed in section 2.5.

In discussing the report, the Forum:

- Clarified that the size of the Forum was not being increased and that the process indicated in the report represented a restructuring of the proportionality based on pupil numbers to fill current vacancies to represent the Academy sector.
- Noted that members represented their sector, as opposed to their organisation or institution.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Note the process for appointing academy representations.
- b) Ratify the following nominations with the new members to join the Forum in January:
 - Jane Horn – Principal at Cromwell Community College – representing the Active Learning Trust
 - Jon Culpin – CEO of Anglian Learning
 - Richard Spencer – Principal of Ely College
 - Philip Hodgson – Board Member – Anglian Learning
 - Alan Rogers – Board Member – Morris Trust
 - Patsy Peres – Principal at Ramsey Spinning Infant and Ramsey Junior

85. CAMBRIDGESHIRE 2019/20 SCHOOL FUNDING FORMULA

The Forum received a report detailing the next stage in the process for setting the Cambridgeshire schools funding formula for 2019-20. Attention was drawn to the response to the consultation in sections 2.1 to 2.5 of the report and members were recommended to approve the transfer of £1.7m from the Schools Block to the Higher Needs Block to lower the £10.4m pressure they were currently facing. It was noted that similar issues were being experienced across the country and it was not specific to Cambridgeshire.

In discussing the report, the Forum:

- Noted that the same issue of a one off payment from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block had arisen the previous year and sought clarification on whether it would be an annual cost, as opposed to an actual one off payment. It was noted that it was the same amount as year, as opposed to a cumulative amount, which is why it was referred to as a one off payment. It was acknowledged that the transfer caused difficulties for schools when setting their budgets but there was no guarantee that this issue would be resolved by the following year.
- Was informed that the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) funding for 2019-20 was expected to decrease from £5m to approximately £3.5m due to a difference in the way funding was calculated, which would affect the whole Schools Block.
- Suggested that the funding mechanism did not represent the demographic. It was acknowledged that there had always been problems with the process and it was a flawed system that did not accurately represent needs. New schools were being

subsidised until they reached full capacity and they were not taken into account in the calculations. The Forum was informed that the issue had been repeatedly brought up in consultations with the Government but that it was hard to predict how much money would be available. It was proposed by a member that when new figures are published in January they should be compared to the projected numbers previously used, in order to identify the accuracy of predictions.

- Confirmed that new schools were initially funded based on guaranteed numbers until they reached capacity, after which their funding was based on actual numbers.
- Pointed out that schools suffered as a result of incorrect data predicting higher numbers of pupils. It was recognised that there were a number of factors that affected the actual levels of pupils and that while the information could not be 100% accurate, it was based on strong methodology. New developments, such as Alconbury, were given as examples of areas where the expected increase in child numbers had not occurred. It was suggested that it was preferable to over-estimate numbers than under-estimate them, but that it was also not in the Council's interest to open new schools or increase places unnecessarily.
- Recognised that it was for the Children and Young People Committee to set the funding formula and balance it.
- Expressed concern that the 30% response level to consultations was disappointingly low and that it indicated there was little belief that there would be much change.
- Noted that budget carryforwards were significantly lower in Cambridgeshire than elsewhere in the Country. It was suggested that discussions were necessary for how to spend this money, so as to not display unused surplus while lobbying for further funds.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Approve the transfer of £1.7m from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block in 2019/20.
- b) Discuss the proposal to fund the transfer by reducing the Age Weighted People Unit (AWPU) values.
- c) Discuss the implications and options in order to manage the £1.7m funding shortfall created from the revised Growth Funding formula.

86. GROWTH FUND AND NEW SCHOOLS FUNDING CRITERIA 2019-20

The Forum received a report on the proposed criteria for the Growth Fund and New Schools Funding to be applied from April 2019. Attention was drawn to section 1.4 of the report, which detailed some of the issues surrounding new schools, as well section 1.5, which was the response from the Education and Skills Funding Agency when questioned over this issue. The Forum recalled that at the last meeting it was proposed to raise the Growth Fund from £2.5m to £3m, but due to the overall fund being lower, it was proposed to maintain it at the current level of £2.5m. Members were reminded that the Growth Fund could not be used to support schools with financial difficulties or for maintaining class structures.

In discussing the report, the Forum:

- Noted that this was an area that had not received much scrutiny in the past.
- Expressed concern that a further £1.7m cut in addition to the transfer of funds to the High Needs Block would cause problems for school budgets. While it was acknowledged that the amounts were relatively small, their effects would be felt across the County.
- Proposed an increase in Council Tax that would specifically divert the extra funds to support children. Council Members informed the Forum that it would be difficult to allocate funds in such a way. It was noted that the Chairman of the Children and Young People Committee had been helpful and proactive in spreading awareness throughout the Council of the pressures faced by the High Needs Block.
- Decided to send a note to Cambridgeshire County Council saying that they would:
 - i) Support an increase to the Council Tax
 - ii) Request that money to be targeted to High Needs. **Action required:** Service Director Education
- Were informed that the Council did increase the Council Tax last year, raising £5m which went into a smoothing fund and subsequently into Children services.
- Amended the fourth recommendation to include additional scrutiny to compare the projected and final numbers.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Note the national changes to Growth Fund allocations
- b) Approve the continuation of the centrally retained Growth Fund at £2.5m for 2019/20.
- c) Approve the criteria in sections 3.0-3.3 to be applied from April 2019 subject to Education and Skills Funding Agency approval.
- d) Approve the amounts for pre-opening and post-opening diseconomies funding as set out in Appendix C to be applied in 2019/20, with additional scrutiny of the numbers.

87. HIGH NEEDS BLOCK FUNDING – THE CHALLENGES FOR CAMBRIDGESHIRE

The Forum received a report on the challenges around High Needs funding. Attention was drawn to sections 2.1 to 2.4 of the report, which detailed the national situation and compared it to Cambridgeshire. It was noted that the next steps, as laid out in section 4.1, would be looked at during the Schools Forum Working Group to be held on 1st February 2020. Decisions on changes would then start to be made from March 2020 onwards. It was suggested that it would be helpful to see the alternatives devised by other authorities. Forum was informed that it was currently hard to come up with such information, as many authorities were not revealing their plans at the current time.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Note the position around High Needs funding – both nationally and within Cambridgeshire.
- b) Continue to work with officers to consider areas where efficiencies could be found and demand for high need services reduced.

88. EASTNET UPDATE

The Forum received an update of EastNet, the proposed replacement for schools' networks across Cambridgeshire, which also sought the Forum's approval to request a continuation of the current funding arrangements from the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) beyond 2020. It was noted that there was already agreement for funding to continue until the end of 2019 and that EastNet would be able to provide the services that many schools were currently seeking.

Forum was informed that the Council had invested heavily in the infrastructure and the project was praised for providing excellent value for money. The Head of Integrated Finance Services stated that he did not want schools to be confronted with a further budget pressure and that given the inherently greater cost of providing the service to rural areas, he encouraged cost sharing to avoid rural schools suffering financially. Funding the installation of fibre connections across the county would benefit the whole community and not just the schools. It was noted, however, that discussions were still underway with the ESFA over how the funding would be spent if approved beyond 2020.

While discussing the report, the Forum:

- Established that approximately £1.37million of the funding was spent on installation and maintenance of the service, while the remainder was spent on infrastructure such as memory, security, anti-virus and filtering facilities. It was noted that under the proposed scheme, the cost of anti-virus programs and filtering would cost schools less than £500 per year, a considerable saving on making their own arrangements.
- Queried what would happen if the internet traffic surpassed 20Gbps, as mentioned in section 3.3 of the report. It was noted that such an eventuality was highly unlikely but that if it did occur, there were contingency plans to increase the bandwidth without impacting school budgets. It was noted that there were daily reports on usage and that calculations had been based on the past five years.
- Acknowledged that individual IT directors in schools often preferred to control such arrangements personally, but the benefits of working together and taking away the necessity for this work would be of benefit to all. It was noted that a certain flexibility existed in allowing for schools to choose whether or not to implement various features of the scheme.
- Noted that there would not be higher costs for small schools that do not currently have the infrastructure in place.
- Were informed that the infrastructure had been sized and costed on the assumption that all schools would sign up. Were there to be a significant number that decided not to do so, a redesign of the infrastructure would be required.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Agree that the previously approved 19/20 retained £1.458m be used to pay for Year 1 of the EastNet contract in 2019/20.

- b) Approve the proposal to request a continuation of current funding arrangements from the Education and Skills Funding Agency.
- c) Note the potential risks for future years.

89. AGENDA PLAN

Additions made to the Agenda Plan for the January meeting included:

- Confirming proposed dates for 2019/20 meetings
- Funding For School Admissions Appeals report
- Financing of Growth Fund report

It was resolved to:

Note the Agenda Plan

90. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Cambridgeshire Schools Forum will meet next on Friday 18th January 2020 at 10:00am in the Kreis Viersen Room, Shire Hall, Cambridge.

The next workshop will be held on Friday 1st February 2020 at 10:00am in Room 128, Shire Hall, Cambridge.

Chairman

Amendment to Minute 74 from the meeting held on 5th October 2018

In the third line, after the words “to help fund” and before the words “Education and Health Care Plans”, the insertion of the following additional text:

“a Special Education Needs Inclusion Fund (SENIF) equivalent for the under threes, to reduce the number of”.

After the subsequent wording “Education and Health Care Plans (EHCPs)” add the following:

“having to be applied for early”.

The wording then continues with:

“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.”

Full wording:

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 **a Special Educational Needs Inclusion Fund (SENIF) equivalent for the under threes, to reduce the number of** Education and Health Care Plans (EHCPs) **having to be applied for early**, 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.

ACADEMY APPOINTMENTS TO SCHOOLS FORUM

To: **Cambridgeshire Schools Forum**

Date: **14 December 2018**

From: **Jonathan Lewis – Service Director - Education**

Purpose: **To outline the process for making academy appointment to Schools Forum and present the latest position in relation to recruiting to vacancies.**

Recommendation:

Schools Forum is asked to note the process for appointing academy representation.

1.0 INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

1.1 Schools Forum is intended to fully represent the different education groups within the County both within the maintained and academy sectors. There are currently 21 academy trusts operating in Cambridgeshire.

1.2 The current membership of the Forum from the Academy Sector is as follows -

Mainstream Academy

Susannah Connell 2015-19

Anna Reeder 2015-2019

Mark Woods 2014-31st December 2018

Andrew Goulding 2015-19

Jonathan Digby 2016-2020

Academy Governors

Philip Hodgson 2014-31st December 2018 (currently chair of Forum)

Alan Rodger 2014-31st December 2018 (currently Vice Chair)

Academy Special School Dr Kim Taylor 2016-2020

Academy Alternate Provision Sarah Roscoe 2018-2022

1.3 As a result of changing pupil numbers (which have increased the share of representation) and resignations, there are currently 3 vacant posts for academies. In addition, three members of the Schools Forum term of membership is due to expire at the end of the year. As a result, there is a need to appoint 6 members to the Forum.

2.0 APPOINTING ACADEMY REPRESENTATIVES

2.1 The best practice guidance for Schools Forum outlines the following –

The relevant group or sub-group is probably best placed to determine how their schools members should be elected. It's good practice for those who draw up the scheme to ensure that a vacancy amongst a represented group would be filled by a nominee elected according to a process that has been determined by all those represented in that group,

As a minimum, we would recommend that the clerk of a schools forum make a record of the process by which the relevant schools within each group and sub-group elect their nominees to the schools forum and be able to advise the Chair of the schools forum and local authority on action that needs to be taken, where necessary, to seek new nominees.

- 2.2 Academy members must be elected by the proprietor bodies of the academies in the local authority's area. Free Schools and University Technical Colleges are classed as academies for this purpose and there is no distinction between sponsored and converter academies.
- 2.3 There are three sub-groups for academy members: mainstream academies, special academies and alternative provision academies and it is for the proprietors of academies within each of these sub-groups to elect their representatives. There is no requirement for academies members to be split into primary and secondary sub-groups.
- 2.4 In order to establish a process for election moving forward, the following procedure will be undertaken for any academy vacancy –
- The Local Authority will notify the CEO of Academy Trusts of any vacancy on the Schools Forum. The vacancies will also be notified to all Heads groups.
 - Nominations will be sought over a 2 week period and collated by the LA.
 - If the number of nomination is below the number of vacancies, a further 2 week nomination period will take place. If the number of nomination remains below the number of vacancies, the LA will seek to directly appoint from within the academy sector noting the balance of places between primary and secondary.
 - If the number of nominations matches the number of vacancies, all nominations will be appointed to the Forum and ratified at the next meeting.
 - If there are more nominations than vacancies, an election will take place. The LA will administer the process and will collate the results as an independent body. Those with the most votes will be elected. There will be one vote per Academy Trust.
 - In the case of a tie, in line with the good practice guidance, the LA should appoint a member from within the nominations received.
 - The outcome of the elections will be notified to all academy trust CEO's
- 2.5 In light of the vacancies outlined in 1.2, an email was sent out to all CEOs for nominations with a deadline of the 13rd December. The following nominations were forthcoming -

- Jane Horn – Principal at Cromwell Community College - representing the Active Learning Trust
- Jon Culpin – CEO of Anglian Learning
- Richard Spencer – Principal – Ely College
- Philip Hodgson – Board Member – Anglian Learning
- Alan Rogers – Board Member – Morris Trust
- Patsy Peres - Principal at Ramsey Spinning Infant and Ramsey Junior – Elliot Foundation

2.6 Given the number of nominations matches the number of vacancies, Schools Forum is asked to ratify the nominations to join the Forum in January.

Source Documents	Location
<i>Schools Forum Best Practice Guidance (2015)</i>	https://tinyurl.com/ydgooqb9