

SCHOOLS' FORUM
MEETING HELD ON 7th MAY 2013

PRESENT:

Primary School Headteachers: Mrs M Carlton, Mrs J Conway, Mr T Gittins, Mr G Leck and Mrs J Rea

Primary School Governors:, Mr H Smith and Mr C Wilson

Secondary School Headteachers: Mr C Walker and Mrs J Wilson

Secondary School Governors: Mr I Bartle and Mr L Wadey

Special School Headteacher: Mrs E Horne

Diocesan Representative: Dr P Mackie - Chair

L A Representative: Councillor Mrs C Clark

Trade Union Representative: Mr D Campbell

Officials: Ms J Humphreys – Corporate Director – Children, Education and Social Care

Mrs L Brown – Head Education, Early Years and Complex Needs

Mr D New – Senior Finance Manager

Mrs N Fletcher – Secretary to the Forum

Also in Attendance: Mr M Gilbey – EFA
 Mr S Blackett – EFA
 Mr P Sunley – Audit Team Manager
 Mrs J Wright - Planning & Partnership Manager

1. **EVACUATION PROCEDURES**

Members noted the Evacuations procedures to be used to exit the building in an emergency.

2. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence had been received from Mrs A Cains and Mrs M O'Connor

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced Mr M Gilbey and Mr S Blackett from the Education Funding Agency (EFA).

3. **DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

Members were invited to declare any personal or business interests they may have in any item included on the agenda.

No interests were declared.

4. MINUTES FROM THE LAST MEETING – 5th February 2013

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 5th February 2013, be approved as a true record.

5. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES5.1 Councils Medium Term Financial Plan Update and Strategy

J Humphreys informed member that since the last meeting Directors of Services had identified savings and a number of briefing sessions had been held with elected members. For Children, Education and Social Care (CESC) the proposals included;

- An “Invest to Save Venture” – working in a joint venture with Spark of Genius, the King Edwin site was to be developed to establish a 35 place school and four properties were to be purchased to be children’s homes
- Being considered under the “Big Ticket Review” were Fostering and Children with Complex Needs;
- A review of the Youth Services is to be undertaken in conjunction with the review of Leisure Services led by Reuben Kench – Head of Culture & Leisure;
- Connexions Service – currently schools buy into the service, but this only covered part of the costs, from September 2014 if schools want to maintain the service they would have to pay full costs;
- There would be a further review of Children Centres;
- Some posts were to be deleted from L Brown’s area of Education, Early Years and Complex Needs;
- Review of transport was to be undertaken.

The expected savings were approx £9m from services proposals and £7m from the Big Ticket Reviews.

6. SCHOOLS’ FORUM DRAFT AUDIT REPORT

P Sunley reported that the audit had been undertaken to ascertain that the operation of the Forum was in compliance with new regulations, during the audit comparisons had been made with other LAs. The audit had identified five recommendations, which were all prudent and advisory only.

- I. The constitution/operating procedure document should be approved by the schools forum and published on the council's website.*

RESOLVED that the constitution and operating procedures would be reviewed and approved by the Forum prior to publication on E-genda.

L Brown
/ D New
& N
Fletcher

- II. During the approval process for the constitution, consideration should be given to reducing the standard length of the terms of office as this needs to be flexible to incorporate any changes to the structure that may be required.*

Following discussion of the length of terms of office for members, skills

knowledge and understanding and the administration arrangements

RESOLVED that officers present proposals to members at the next meeting.

D New/
N
Fletcher

- III. *Consideration should be given to formalising training arrangements for forum members; these should then be outlined in the constitution document.*

J Wilson highlighted that D New undertook informal training with members if requested, but it needed to be recognised that members had very different training needs.

C Wilson suggested that an Induction Pack could be produced for new members.

RESOLVED that D New would formulate an Induction Pack for new members, which would include sign posting to further information / training if required.

D New

- IV. *Consideration should be given to include the substitution arrangements in the constitution in the event of dispute.*

RESOLVED that arrangements for substitution be included in the operating procedures.

N.
Fletcher

- V. *Consideration should be given to including details of members of the Forum contact details on the council's website.*

RESOLVED that Forum's membership would be published on E-genda and that contact for members would be via School and Governor Support.

N
Fletcher

Members AGREED that in future School's Forum would be included in the Audit schedule on a two year cycle.

L Wadey considered that further discussion was required with regard to voting procedures.

P Mackie – Chair stated that in the history of the Forum, members had always tried to avoid voting and to go with the majority feeling working to benefit all schools within the Borough.

Mr P Sunley left the meeting.

7. TAMHS

L Brown gave an update on TAMHS. The contract with Alliance Services had originally been until 31st March 2013, but following the securing of funding (agreed at a previous meeting) the contract had been extended until the end of the academic year (31st July 2013). The extension of the contract would only enable Alliance to deal with the back log of referrals; no new referrals could be made. Concerns had also been raised as to who referred children to Alliance, as the agreement had been that only those with greatest need would be referred. Members understood that there had never been an agreement that GPs could make referrals to this service funded by schools and the LA.

Discussion had taken place as to whether the contract could be further extended or whether a new contract would have to be let via the procurement process. To establish a new contract funding would have to be secured and there was no funding from Health for TAMHS.

J Humphreys stated that in order for the LA to procure a service on behalf of schools, schools would need to sign up to the collective approach to procurement.

L Brown reported the Alliance were currently at the stage where they would have to issue redundancy notices to staff if there was no new contract. She advised that if there was no agreement from schools to the pooling of funding, there could be no new contract.

J Conway suggested that schools should be contacted to ascertain whether they would be willing to sign up for a further period of time.

C Walker stated that in his opinion the need was there and that if schools do not support the service the expertise would be lost.

J Humphreys questioned whether schools would want to continue with an annual contract or procure services for a 5 year period with an annual review. She suggested that academies could also buy into the service and that perhaps a differentiated package could be offered to schools/academies dependant on their needs.

RESOLVED that

- a) all schools / academies would be contacted to ascertain whether they would wish to continue/extent the current contract until the end of the 2013/14 financial year;
- b) all schools / academies would be contacted to ascertain whether they would be interested in the procurement of a 5 year contract (with an annual review);
- c) work be undertaken to draw up a specification for procurement of services.

8. DISADVANTAGED 2 YEAR OLDS UPDATE

D New reminded members that at the previous meeting consideration had been given to a paper "Schools Budget 2013/14 which detailed proposals relating to Early Years funding, particularly arrangements for disadvantaged two years olds. Then on 25th March the DfE had issued a "Consultation on the proposed changes to the role of the Local Authority in early education and childcare" with a response date of 6th May.

The circulated report gave members an outline of the funding reform aspects of the proposals. D New gave a detailed précis of the report, advising members that 15 hours early years education would become a statutory entitlement for eligible two year olds from 1st September 2013, with the LA having a duty to secure provision for an estimated 571 children in Stockton (approximately 20% of 2 year olds), who meet the following criteria:

- Looked after children;
- Children who meet the Free School Meal criteria.

The revenue allocations within DSG for 2013/14 was made up of two elements;

- Place based funding of £1.578m for statutory places which must be funded once the entitlement for 20% of two year olds comes into force from September 2013.
- Trajectory building of £0.620m to be used, in the main, to create non statutory places in preparation for the 2014 entitlement for 40% of two year olds

With local authorities being strongly encouraged to fund providers based on the following:

- a. flat hourly rate for two year old places with no additional supplements.
- b. to offer a formula that has sufficient flexibility to provide additional support for two year olds with additional educational needs and Special Educational Needs.
- c. to fund places in settings that are rated good or outstanding by OfSTED, or satisfactory where the local authority has an agreed improvement action plan in place particularly where sufficiency of places is an issue.

In Stockton many schools take children as soon as they reach their 3rd birthday. Providing the school meets the criteria and wishes to take part, eligible children could be funded through this programme until they move on to the 3 & 4 year old free nursery entitlement. Work was underway to look at the implications of this on an individual school basis and the current estimated additional funding to primary schools was estimated to be around £238k pa based on previous year's participation.

The roll out of the programme was:-

- April to July 2013 – the existing 74 places funded through the pilot would continue;
- From September 2013 places would be allocated against the 571 target.

This would result in some one off savings in the non-trajectory funding which could be used for DSG overspend in other areas. Implementing the 2 year old free nursery entitlement would create pressure on the current capacity within the Families Information Service (FIS) who were responsible for managing the administrative processes associated with the programme. The systems required would build on those currently in place for the free nursery entitlement for 3 & 4 year olds. It was proposed that funding of £26k be made available from the allocation to increase capacity to ensure robust systems were in place for the future.

Hourly rates:-

- The proposal was that the hourly rate would not be reduced to accommodate additional children over the 571 target, as it was not expected that this number would be exceeded.
- It was also anticipated that the hourly rate would stand at approximately £4.77 per hour. This reflected a slight reduction in the £4.85 paid to the LA as part of the Statutory Place Allocation. The reduction would be used to support the increase in capacity required within the FIS team.

However, this rate would only be guaranteed for the financial year 2013 /14. The LA was waiting for additional guidance on the criteria for 2014-15 in addition to the funding levels that would be made available to support the September 2014 target.

Trajectory funding:-

- Trajectory funding of £0.62m had been made available to increase capacity within the market to meet the targets for September 2014. A significant amount of work would be required to increase the available places, in the right area and to meet the set criteria. This would be particularly true where SEN children were concerned.
- In order to achieve this it was proposed that the LA commission a partner organisation to support them in the work necessary to increase the number of places available. This would involve developing existing provision alongside supporting the creation of new places where gaps had been clearly identified.
- Trajectory funding would also be used to fund a number of pilot programmes from April prior to the statutory date of September 2013. These programmes would be in a range of settings, where places were funded 'up front' in order to trial and develop new initiatives.

T Gittins advised that for 2 year olds to attend a school setting consideration would have to be given to;

- Staff training
- Building needs
- Staffing ratios
- Links to the EYFS curriculum

Jane Wright reported that normally it was not expected that schools would take 2 year olds and there was capacity for 2 year olds in PVI settings.

D New recommended to members that in respect of Disadvantaged two year olds they support the following:-

- i. The suggested hourly rate of £4.77 for 2013-14;
- ii. The proposal to 'top slice' the Statutory Place Allocation to support the necessary increase in capacity within FIS at a cost of £26k.
- iii. The decision to commission a partner organisation to support the LA in increasing capacity within the early years & childcare market, to meet the demand for eligible 2 year old places.
- iv. The proposal to fund a number of pilot programmes from the Trajectory funding.
- v. To note the DfE proposals in the most recent Early Education and Childcare consultation.

RESOLVED to approve the recommendations as outlined above.

9. SCHEME FOR FINANCING SCHOOLS

Members had been circulated with a report which outlined the DfE statutory guidance (effective from April 2013) and proposed changes to Stockton's Scheme for Financing Schools. D New advised members that the LA was

required to publish their scheme for financing schools setting out the financial relationship between them and the schools they maintain. Also any amendments to the scheme must be consulted on with all schools and be approved by the Schools' Forum. He gave a précis of the report highlighting that there was very little choice with regard to the proposed changes (detailed in paragraphs 4 – 14 of the report).

T Gittins questioned under what circumstances would the LA apply paragraph 10 - "Costs incurred by the LA in securing provision specified in a statement of SEN where the governing body of a school fails to secure such provision despite the delegation of funds in respect of low cost high incidence SEN and/or specific funding for a pupil with High Needs".

D New advised that each case would be considered on an individual basis, this had never been evoked by the LA yet.

P Mackie questioned whether under paragraph 6 - "only Schools' Forum members representing maintained schools should approve scheme changes", do academy representatives have the right to vote.

D New Report that academy representatives were not entitled to vote on changes to the scheme.

Following discussion, members,

RESOLVED that

- a) they had no comments on the proposals prior to consultation with all maintained schools;
- b) a report be brought to the next meeting of the Forum confirming the outcome of the consultation.

10. DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT UPDATE

D New was pleased to report that following the LA submitting a business case regarding the shortfall in Post 16 funding, in March notification had been received that case had been successful and the LA had been awarded £665,700, which revised this element of the DSG to £1,310,002.

Members thanked officers and colleagues at the EFA for their support with the formulation of the business case.

11. ANALYSIS OF SCHOOLS BLOCK FUNDING AND FORUM MEMBERS VIEWS / EXPERIENCES SO FAR OF THE NEW FUNDING SYSTEM

Members were informed that earlier this year, local authorities in England submitted to the Education Funding Agency (EFA) their formulae for allocating their Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) Schools Block funding for 2013-14 to their schools. For 2013-14, schools were funded using a maximum of twelve clearly defined factors. The DfE had published analysis of the formulae and a detailed data file showing the 2013-14 funding formula used by each local authority. D New gave a summary of the circulated report which compared the Stockton-on-Tees formulae with the Tees Valley, North East and England averages.

T Gittins highlighted that for a number of years primary colleagues had resisted schools having responsibility for low incident high needs SEN funding, as they did not consider that it was in the best interest of pupils. Concerns had been expressed that the change in the national Funding scheme regarding High Needs, did not reflect the unpredictable nature of pupils entering the lower end of primary schools. Also any conflict parents may have with regard to SEN provision for their children would now be directed to schools rather than the LA.

Following discussion, members,

RESOLVED to note the report.

12. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

12.1 Appreciation

Mr M Gilby thanked members for his attendance at the meeting, he advised that he would be retiring shortly and his successor would be Mr Gary Dobson.

13. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

RESOLVED that the next meeting would be held at 2:00pm on Tuesday 9th July 2013 at the Education Centre, Junction Road, Norton.