

SCHOOLS FORUM
MEETING HELD ON 10th DECEMBER 2013

PRESENT:

Primary School Headteachers: Mrs J Conway, 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 Governor: 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

Observer: Councillor Mrs A McCoy – Cabinet Member Children and Young People

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

Mr D New – Senior Finance Manager

Mrs N Fletcher – Secretary to the Forum

Also in Attendance: Mrs J Harvey – Early Years and Complex Needs Manager
 Mr E Jewitt – Manager Workforce Development and Support Services
 Mr N Chilton – Principal Adviser - Inclusion

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, Mrs M Carlton, Mr T Gittins, Mr B Jordon, Mr G Leck and Mrs L Brown.

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

3. **DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

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

Mr D Campbell as the Trade Union Representative declared an interest in agenda item 10 Delegation / De-delegation.

4. **MINUTES FROM THE LAST MEETING – 15th OCTOBER 2013**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 15th October 2013, be approved

as a true record.

5. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

Members AGREED to take Agenda Item 7 at this point in the meeting.

7. EARLY YEARS HIGH NEEDS

The circulated report informed members of the arrangements for Early Years High Needs criteria and funding.

D New informed members that unlike arrangements for children aged 5 and above there was no national standard approach for Early Years children in relation to High Needs Funding, therefore it was left to individual authorities to determine and manage their own arrangements. The Government was currently out to consultation on reforms to the SEN system which were expected to be phased in from September 2014.

D New advised that at present in Stockton, all three and four year olds were entitled to the flexible free education provision, totalling 15 hours per week and from September 2013 this had been extended to disadvantaged 2 year olds and Looked After Children; and was to be extended further from September 2014. Most Early Years children with very complex needs were educated in the Early Support Nursery which was funded from the High Needs Block. For pupils aged younger than 5 years placed in specialist setting (i.e. special schools or special units in mainstream schools), provision was currently funded in the same way as for pupils aged 5-16 in specialist settings. The DfE had said that this would continue under the place-plus approach.

There were a small number of children with High Needs in mainstream early years settings (PVI's, maintained schools and academies) for which there was currently no formalised defined way of providing funding to meet their high needs. D New highlighted that settings were funded on a different formula basis depending on whether children were in Early Years or in Reception classes or above.

Members were advised that at present, the majority of children's special needs would be met through base funding provided to early years settings, however, for children with high needs, settings required additional resources to ensure the child's needs were met and that they made progress, therefore the proposals were;

- To introduce Early Years High Needs bands (the criteria were outlined in Appendix 1 of the report). Children meeting the criteria in bands B and above would attract top up funding on the same basis as children aged 5 plus, however this would be proportionate to the 15 hours of provision.
- Early years settings were not funded in their base funding for the first £6,000 of any support for children with High Needs. It was proposed that this would be provided proportionately (ie £3,600 pa) for each child meeting the high needs criteria in band B and above in addition to the top up values.
- Applications for early years High Needs top up funding would need to be made by mainstream early years providers to the High Needs Panel (the same process for children aged 5 and above), therefore the proposal was that the panel be strengthened with specific Early Years representation.
- Top up funding would be applied for through the High Needs Panel for children

who have a statutory eligibility for an educational placement and only from settings that were in receipt of Early Years Single Funding Formula through the DSG.

- For high needs pupils placed in mainstream early years settings, the fifteen hours of free early education would be funded from the Local Authority's Early Years Block and any additional top-up funding from the High Needs Block.

J Conway questioned for 2 year olds who would pull together the information for application to the High Needs Panel, as school could not.

J Harvey advised that this would be dependent upon who was working with the child possibly the Health Visitor.

J Humphreys suggested that the information could be gained from the CAF.

J Conway questioned whether PVIs would submit the information to schools prior to the child being admitted to the school.

Following discussion, members,

RESOLVED to support the proposals and that they be reviewed after one year of operation.

Mrs J Harvey left the meeting.

6. EMPLOYEE MUTUALISATION – STOCKTON ICT UNIT

Members had received a report which had been presented to Cabinet on 27th November 2013 regarding the proposed Employee Mutualisation – Stockton ICT Unit (SITCU). Mr E Jewitt gave members a précis of the report explaining that the initial idea had been from the staff in SITCU. He outlined the three options which had been considered, highlighting the recommendation, which Cabinet had agreed and reasons for;

Recommendation – to note the proposal for the employee mutualisation of SICTU and endorse the decision to progress with implementation, subject to a final report and sign-off by the Lead Cabinet Members for Children & Young People and Corporate Management and Finance.

Reasons for - The employee mutualisation of SICTU would secure the future of the service and realise a number of benefits including:

- The ability to capitalise on growth opportunities and meet the changing customer base
- Mitigate future financial risks and bring wider resource benefits to the schools / Council
- Provide the opportunity for local economic benefits and job creation
- Capitalise on the entrepreneurial vision of the staff
- Improve the ability to be flexible in meeting customer needs
- A social purpose entity with re-investment into the community
- Support current policy on opportunities for employee led mutualisation

He advised members that following Cabinet's decision the implementation date for the mutualisation was 1st April 2014 and the organisation would be a non-profit making company limited by guarantee.

J Conway considered that this was an excellent development.

L Wadey questioned what would happen to any profit made by the organisation.

E Jewitt advised members that the organisation would have to manage its own costs including setting its charges to schools. Advice was being sought on loans taken out from the LA which were to be paid back over a three year period. The proposal was to widen their customer base, which may lead to a reduction in fees to schools.

J Humphreys stated that this was a very positive idea put forward by staff and there was a commitment for them to remain located from a base in the Borough.

Members RESOLVED to note the report.

Mr E Jewitt left the meeting.

8. SCHOOL BUDGET MONITORING 2013/14

Members had been circulated with a report which provided them with the current projected outturn position on the Schools Budget, based on information at the end of November 2013.

D New gave a summary of the report during which he highlighted that there was currently a proposed underspend of £894k forecast for the end of the 2013/14 financial year which included;

- Top Up Funding – Independent Providers - expected underspend of £638k. This needed to be viewed in the context of a realistic budget being set prior to the announcement of a successful business case submission and additional budget being added given the uncertainties that existed around this whole area, particularly that relating to post 16.
- SEN Support Services. – expected underspend of £67k, as a result of staffing vacancies not being filled.
- Contributions to Combined Budgets - expected underspend of £50k due to the contribution to Mental Health and Parenting project not being required as covered by existing staff.
- Dedicated Schools Grant b/fwd - £151k underspend. The balance required to fund 2012-13 overspend was lower than had been anticipated.

He advised members that £500k contingency discussed at the last meeting was expected to be committed and that it should also be noted that work was on-going to determine the financial impact of the extended entitlement for disadvantaged two years olds which became a statutory responsibility from the beginning of the autumn term. Any surplus or deficit on the Schools Budget supported by Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) was carried forward to the following financial year. As such, this position would continue to be monitored and would need to be considered as part of the 2014/15 budget.

RESOLVED to note the current financial position on the Schools Budget 2013/14

J Conway informed members that currently a major project was being undertaken to develop the PRU and Marsh House Avenue site to facilitate KS2 and KS3 pupils at the PRU and create provision a 16 -25 provision on the site. She questioned whether any of the proposed underspend could be allocated to support the developments as the facilities would be for some of the most vulnerable pupils within Stockton.

C Walker considered that the developments on the Marsh House Avenue site were an excellent opportunity to create a fantastic facility and he would not like to see the

opportunity slip away.

E Horne advised that with the KS2 pupils moving into the PRU, work need to be under taken to facilitate the move.

J Humphreys suggested that as the development was a one off non-recurring expense, those involved should present a paper to the next meeting explaining the rationale and costs.

Cllr C Clarke questioned whether the underspend could be used to fund free school meals for all primary schools pupils to help improve attainment.

J Humphreys explained that the DfE had proposed an initiative to provide free school meals for pupils up to the age of 7 years, but currently the timescales for introduction were unclear. She highlighted that the underspend was a “one off” and therefore could not be used to support ongoing projects year on year.

L Wadey questioned why the PRU – Bishopton Centre had not been insured against flooding and was there any value in the Bishopton Centre site following the flood and could it be used to offset the development of the PRU on the Marsh House Avenue site.

D New reported that due to the nature of the Bishopton Centre site it could not be insured.

9. SCHOOLS FORUM INDUCTION PACK

Members had received a paper which sought their comments on the proposed contents of an Induction Pack for new members to the Schools Forum, including signposting to further information and training, which had been produced in response to the Audit Report earlier in the year.

D New highlighted that he would provide individualised training on request to new members, as it was recognised that members had very different training needs depending on their previous experience, knowledge and understanding of school funding prior to coming into their role on the Forum.

P Mackie suggested that an evaluation form be included in the Induction Pack.

C Wilson suggested that as a fairly new member of Schools Forum to review the proposed Induction Pack and submit his comments to D New.

C Wilson

10. DELEGATION / DE-DELEGATION

D New informed members that Schools Forum had to consider annually Delegation / De-delegation for maintain schools, with members from those sectors voting only. He suggested that detailed discussion take place at the next meeting.

D Campbell reminded members to the fact that they had previously agreed to de-delegate Trade Union Facility time and he drew members’ attention to a joint Trade Union letter recommending that Schools Forum members continue to de-delegate this funding.

L Wadey questioned with more schools converting to academy status would the cost of de-delegation just be split across the remaining maintained schools or would the cost to schools be based on pupil numbers.

D New advised that the cost to schools would be by pupil numbers based on the formula factor.

Mr N Chilton entered the meeting.

11. TARGETTED MENTAL HEALTH IN SCHOOLS (TAMHS)

N Chilton informed members that the current TAMHS arrangement could not continue after 31st March 2014. He reported that Mr J White had been commissioned to look at a revised contract for TAMHS and as part of this work Mr J White had consulted with LA Officers and Headteachers. The overarching aim was to seek a Borough wide service that meets the needs presented by the emotional health and wellbeing of young people with a focus on prevention, early detection and early intervention, with referrals being made via the CAF process. The proposed revised contract was in two parts;

Part One – Training

LA funded universal core package of basic training for schools and academies within the Borough, available to all staff. To be delivered early within the one year contract.

Part Two – Intervention and Support

Section A – LA funded programme of intervention and support targeting the primary sector only. Hours initially distributed by LA across 6 primary planning areas. The distribution of hours would be decided by relevant Headteachers in consultation with the LA and based on clear and transparent need;

- Range of therapies and other work
- Accessible 52 weeks per year
- Flexible delivery
- Work beyond the support a school could reasonably be expected to provide.

Section B – A framework contract with schools / academies where they could purchase a targeted service at a level chosen by them and reflecting their needs;

- Referrals only come from schools/academies
- Provision usually on the school/academy site
- Named worker
- Range of therapies and other work
- Accessible 52 weeks per year
- Flexible delivery

It was expected that under Section A & B the provider would work a triage system where within 5 days an assessment would be carried out.

The LA had held back an amount of money to support any needs that may arise in the event of a critical incident within a school/academy.

Part Three – Schools/academies would also be able to choose from a menu of training packages for some or all of their staff. This would allow schools/academies to enhance their universal provision and build capacity.

Members RESOLVED to support the proposed contract as outlined above.

D New informed members that £150k LA funding had been allocated over and above the school/academy purchases as per the framework agreement.

12. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

12.1 Education Funding Agency (EFA)

Members were informed that Officers from the EFA may be attending the next meeting of the Forum.

12.2 LSCB

J Humphreys informed members that at the recent LSCB meeting discussion had taken place around CAF and the challenges being faced. An alternative model was being considered with the CAF team to cover across the Borough, to set up and organize the first meetings. Currently work was being undertaken with regard to the alternative model, considering contributions from partners. She highlighted that the proposals were to be discussed at forth coming Secondary and Primary Headteachers meetings.

J Conway considered that staff would need to have a Social Care background and knowledge of services, or have training to support them.

13. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

RESOLVED that the next meeting would be held at 1:30pm on Tuesday 21st January 2014 at the Media Centre, Grangefield School.