

SCHOOLS FORUM
MEETING HELD ON 3 MAY 2016

PRESENT:

Primary School Headteachers: Mrs S Randle, Mrs J Conway (Chair), Mrs M Carlton and Mrs J Rea

Primary School Governors: Mrs S Symington, Mrs J Gair and Mr B Winter

Secondary School Governor: Mr J Thompson

Academy Representatives: Mrs M O'Connor, Mrs L Spellman and Ms B Atkinson

Secondary Headteacher Representatives: Mr S White and Mr C Walker

Diocesan Representative: Mr C Hammill

Pupil Referral Unit Representative: Ms L Chilton

LA Representative: Cllr C Clark

Trade Union Representative: Mr L Russell

Officials: Mr D New – Senior Finance Manager
 Cllr A McCoy – Cabinet Member for Young People and Children
 Ms D McConnell – Head of Schools and SEN
 Mrs E Barrett – Secretary to the Schools Forum

Also in attendance: Mrs J Wright – Planning and 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 were submitted on behalf of J Bailey and J Humphreys.

3. **DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

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

There were no interests declared.

4. **MINUTES FROM THE LAST MEETING 26 JANUARY 2016**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 26 January 2016 be approved as a true record.

5. **MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

5.1 **Growth Fund**

J Wright introduced herself to reply to member's questions around the named Primary Schools raised from the previous meeting. An exercise had been

undertaken around the number of primary children and that areas in certain parts of the Borough were short of available Reception places. Schools had been approached to ask if they could accommodate additional children from September 2016. A similar exercise had been undertaken this year to analyse predictions moving forward. A feasibility study had been undertaken by the Capital Assets Team who had identified the Schools. St Patrick's and Fairfield Primary withdrew from the offer. A report was sent to Cabinet with the main aim to have places agreed by September 2017. There were only 3 Schools which needed additional places for September 2016. A change in the way place needs were identified had been made as predictions had not been accurate and had not highlighted the pressure points.

6. EARLY YEARS UPDATE

J Wright gave a summary of the circulated report on 30 hour free childcare entitlement. The following was highlighted:

- There was a commitment to double the amount of free childcare to 30 hours from September 2017 for working parents;
- The national average hourly rate for 3 and 4 year olds would increase by around 30p per hour to £4.88,
- The market would need to grow to accommodate additional places and work was underway to identify suitable providers;
- Investigations were underway with childcare settings and parents around the desire to take up the 30 hour offer;
- A short questionnaire would be sent to Primary Schools to ascertain the numbers of parents topping up their free 15 hours provision and how many were not accessing the 15 hours;
- A submission would need to be made to the DfE on capital expression of interest to support the expansion;
- Two working groups had been established with one to look at School provision and one for childcare providers;
- A public consultation for parents of children age 0-3 would be undertaken in the summer term;
- The consultation period was open from 3 April to 6 June 2016 with the LA providing a response;
- If specific Governing Bodies would like to respond, a link had been provided however responses could also be sent to J Wright for inclusion in the LA reply;
- Members noted that it was key to have the right support provided in the right areas of the Borough particularly in light of the every changing migration;
- Members asked if a question could be added to the questionnaire around parents who work but don't earn enough to qualify for free childcare.

J Wright was thanked and withdrew from the meeting.

7. DFE NATIONAL FUNDING FORMULA

D New outlined previously circulated papers on the Schools National Funding Formula Consultation and High Needs Funding Reforms. It was explained that two consultations had commenced in March 2016, last six weeks, being the first of a two stage consultation process. Due to time constraints of the consultation the LA had submitted a response prior to a Schools Forum meeting. The Government considered the current system out dated and no longer fit for purpose. The following was highlighted:

- The reforms would follow 7 principles that would underpin the funding system;
- There were some conflicts around the principles although the proposals were intended to be fair and simple;
- DSG would continue with the addition of a fourth block: Central Schools Block, this would include funding for central services;

- There would be a phased approach with a “soft” national funding formula for 2017-2018, 2018-2019 and a “hard” approach for 2019-2020;
- The “hard” approach would be a nationally determined formula for both maintained and Academy settings;
- This heralded a big change for the LA as currently High Needs pressures were being managed through the flexibility of the Block system however this would not be possible under the proposals;
- The proposed building blocks and factors on the national funding formula were explained with some factors removed from 2019-2020 and an additional growth factor added;
- It was unclear how the weighting of factors would be apportioned or the levels of funding would be allocated therefore it was difficult to measure the impact on the LA at the present time;
- Basic Per Pupil funding - the calculation would remain using the current 3 groupings;
- Additional needs factor would include Ever 6 FSM, IDACI, FSM, EAL and low attainment;
- School Costs to reflect premises and overheads would remain as a lump sum;
- Rates and PFI factor were managed locally, rates were cost neutral in Stockton. This was subject to further consideration under consultation; ie basis of historic spend for 2017/18 and 2018/19 with views being sought from 2019/20 on a formulaic approach
- Pupil Premium would remain a separate grant;
- The Post 16 factor would be removed however Stockton did not use this;
- There would be changes in the process through transition with the LA unable to retain any funds from the Schools Block from 2017-2018;
- The Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) was currently minus 1.5% however this there would be greater flexibility moving forward at LA level;
- The role of Schools Forum would be reviewed in 2019-2020 with de-delegation removed as funds would be allocated directly to Schools and it would be their decision whether to buy into central services;
- There would be a cap on Schools gaining and MFG from the changes in the national formula;
- ESG had two elements: retained duties rates and general funding rates. The general funding rate would be removed from 2017-2018 however there would be protections in place for academies. This would impact on those Schools who were earlier converters to Academy status;
- The LA would step back from running School Improvement from September 2017 and funding would be withdrawn:
- Further information would be provided after the second consultation.

RESOLVED that members note the report.

Cllr McCoy raised concerns around School Improvement. It was felt that the LA's role was being removed from School Improvement however they were still accountable for this. The LA would be committed to supporting School Improvement regardless of funding. D McConnell outlined that a paper was being presented to Cabinet next week around the statutory LA duties and the challenges including investigating becoming a LA MAT. It was explained that many Primary Schools were investigating the Academy route and if the LA were proposing a MAT then Schools needed this information in a timely manner. D McConnell highlighted that Schools should not rush into making an Academy decision as partnerships needed to be the right one for the School.

It was also explained that the Diocese and Anglican Church had met and looked at a memorandum of understanding which was the Diocesan route for these faith Schools. It was reiterated that 2020 was not so far away. C Walker highlighted that the LA had been heavily involved in School Improvement and it would be beneficial to keep this

experience and support.

8. DFE HIGH NEEDS FUNDING FORMULA AND OTHER REFORMS

D New referred to the previously circulated report which referred to the consultation on High Needs funding. This was the first stage of a two part consultation process which focused on the allocation of high needs funding to the LA with the second stage looking at the detail of the proposals and weighting and protections. The Government had referred to the ISOS research who had made 17 proposals on funding reforms. The following was highlighted:-

- A more formulaic approach was needed for distributing funding from national to local level;
- There were more financial pressures on a more complicated system;
- The proposals included using objective proxy measures to fund rather than allocating based on historical spend and other factors;
- A table summary had been provided which outlined the proposed formula factors;
- There would be a lag effect as funding would be based on the previous academic year as far as pupil numbers are concerned;
- The Population factor would be added based on ages 2-18;
- Factors would be added including Disability Living Allowance and children not in good health;
- Low attainment factors would be included for Key Stage 2 and 4;
- Deprivation factor would be used It was difficult to benchmark where the LA would fall with the proposed funding reforms however it was widely acknowledged there would be both winners and losers;
- The Government would continue to transition the funding to LA's for the next 5 years with inclusion of an element relating to current spending;
- ISOS recommended removing the notional SEN fund however the Government were keen to keep this ;
- There is a proposed change to the way Schools ARP's were funded. These pupils would be funded at the AWPU plus £6,000 however for Stockton this was below the current £10,000 per place and therefore a loss of funding;
- The LA would continue to commission High Needs places along with their statutory duties;
- The second stage of consultation would take place later in the year.

RESOLVED that members note the report.

9. HIGH NEEDS SUB GROUP

S Symington gave an overview of the High Needs Sub Group work so far. A small summary report was provided. It was outlined that there had been numerous meetings of the sub group and High Needs group. The actions were noted and the project plan was on track. It was reiterated however that many actions were reliant on the outcome of the consultation around High Needs funding and were therefore outstanding. The risk register had been populated and any high risks were reviewed at each meeting. S Symington confirmed that she had attended some panel meetings and fed back to J Harvey.

D McConnell explained that a proposal had been muted at the High Needs Sub Group around the ARP provision in the LA. Questions were raised around the location of provisions and were they meeting the needs of the children. Was there enough provision for a child to follow a provision map and to allow progression. It was proposed to review ARP's and the needs. There was a need to reduce the transport costs for children who were currently having to take a taxi to their provision along with an acknowledgement that travelling could also be detrimental for the child. Support was

needed earlier in the process when a child first presented with an issue, this could be around school internal support, Educational Psychology support and therapeutic interventions.

There was an option of establishing a Free School which would allow further provision within the LA and to reduce the need for out of Borough provision. It was agreed that the impact of a National Funding Formula for High Needs may well impact the number of spaces offered in ARP's as there would be less funding available and a concern that more children would be expected to manage in mainstream School. There may be a move away from ARP provision.

10. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

There were no further items of business to discuss.

10. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

RESOLVED that the next meeting would be held at 1:30pm on Tuesday 5 July 2016 at The Education Centre in Stockton Sixth Form College with apologies submitted from Cllr A McCoy.