

SCHOOLS FORUM
MEETING HELD ON 4 JULY 2017

PRESENT:

Primary School Headteachers: Mrs J Conway (Chair) and Mrs M Carlton

Primary School Governors: Mr B Winter and Mrs S Symington

Academy Representatives: Mrs L Spellman, Mrs G Booth and Mr E Huntington

Special School Representative: Ms Y Limb

Pupil Referral Unit Representative: Ms S Birch

LA Representative: Cllr C Clark

Trade Union Representative: Mr L Russell

Officials: Ms D McConnell – Assistant Director, Schools and SEN
 Mr G Waller - Accountant
 Mr A Bryson – Finance Manager
 Mrs E Barrett – Secretary to the Schools Forum

Also in Attendance (part): Mrs L Purdy - HR

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 Mr M Gray, Cllr A McCoy, Mrs J Gair, Mrs S Randle, Ms S Richardson, Mr J Thompson, Mr C Walker and Mr S White.

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**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 2 May 2017 be approved as a true record.

5. **MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

There were no matters arising.

6. **APPRENTICESHIP LEVY**

L Purdy had been invited to give Schools Forum an update on the Apprenticeship Levy. At the last Schools Forum meeting it had been agreed to hold an additional event to

investigate the Apprenticeship Levy with all relevant parties. A roadshow had been held on 27 June 2017 (minutes had been circulated prior to the meeting). Around 14 out of 34 eligible Schools were represented at the roadshow. P Merrifield gave a presentation around generic information. A Rix gave the LA data.

£170,000 from Schools Budget would be kept aside for the Apprenticeship Levy fund. Two options had been presented on how to apply for some of the fund. Alternative options were also sought. Option 2 had been the recommended route which would allow any eligible School to apply for a share of the pot if they wanted to train an apprentice. It was reiterated that Schools needed to pay the apprentice's salary. A panel would be established to review applications for the Apprenticeship Levy funding.

L Purdy had visited St John the Baptist Primary School to give a presentation to their Governing Body which had been well received. HR were available to attend any Governing Body if requested to advise on the Apprenticeship Levy.

It was noted that as soon as the Teaching Apprenticeship element had been released and cost implications, then the funding allocations would need to be reviewed. It was anticipated that the Teaching Apprenticeship would be expensive.

Members asked about the timescale involved. It was anticipated that the Teaching element would be available September 2018 however the training provider needed to be established. *Members asked if the fund was time limited.* It was agreed that the funds were available for two years after the start of payments. If a School converted to Academy status then no further funds would be drawn from those Schools which in turn would reduce the overall pot of funding. *Members asked if Schools could withdraw from the levy scheme.* There were no exemptions outlined at the moment for maintained and VC Schools.

Votes were unanimous on adopting Option 2. *Members asked if the panel would run on an academic year.* L Purdy explained that applications tended to be made for the start of the academic year. There had only been one request for funding received so far.

An email would be sent out to Schools as budgets and staffing had already been agreed for this financial year. Information packs would be sent out to Schools who had not attended the roadshow.

L Purdy was thanked and withdrew from the meeting.

7. SCHEME FOR FINANCING SCHOOLS

A Bryson gave a verbal report. The DfE had updated their guidance on the process of financing Schools and consequently the LA were updating their guidance in line with this. There was a requirement to publish this document. Any changes needed to be consulted with relevant parties and Schools Forum. There were not many material changes to note.

Once updated the guidance would be emailed out to maintained Schools for consultation and comments before ratifying at Schools Forum. It would then be published on the LA website.

A Bryson

8. 2016 – 2017 SCHOOLS BUDGET OUTTURN

A paper had been circulated prior to the meeting on Schools Budget and Balances 2016 – 2017 including Appendix 1. The following was highlighted:

School Budget

- There was a surplus of £79,000 on a £150 million budget. This was a difference to the previously reported over spend. The variances were noted in Appendix 1;
- There had been an over spend on High Needs including top ups and independent providers of £880,000, this was driven by higher demand for funding and support. It was anticipated that this would continue to be over spent;
- This had been offset against a £255,000 surplus in disadvantaged two year old funding and a £144,000 underspend on carry forward figures. It was noted that these were non recurring and could not be relied upon this year;
- There was caution and concern around the High needs areas.

School Balances

- Maintained School Balances stood at £3.66 million;
- This was a reduction of £610,000 from the previous year and would continue to reduce;
- There were 12 Primary Schools with excess balances. 11 Schools had been approved to carry the excess forward with one on hold pending feasibility works;
- Two Schools had a deficit below £10,000. Both Schools had a plan moving forward to address the deficit.

RESOLVED that Schools Forum note the position for 2016 – 2017.

Members questioned the High Needs funding concerns. There were also concerns around the changes to Enhanced School Provision and what this would mean for the children moving forward. The new hub system would generate some cost savings as children would be redirected to Early Help. The impact of the new funding formula on High Needs was still an unknown quantity. Presently funds could be moved between School Blocks however it was unclear if this would be restricted moving forwards. It was agreed that children's needs still had to met.

D McConnell outlined that the most expensive element was out of borough provision with independent providers. £75,000 per child was the cost to attend Breckonborough. The key would be to bring these children back into the LA. The Free School bid across the Tees Valley had been unsuccessful however only 20 out of the 60 applications had been successful. A meeting would be held today in the Tees Valley to put a new bid forward for an institution for ASD and challenging behavior. This was the biggest gap in provision in the LA. Other Trusts were on discussions around additional provision.

The NE12 arrangements led by Newcastle were starting to have an impact regarding the tendering process for provision contracts. M Gray was undertaking a CMap review which involved a multi agency panel looking at complex and hard to place children.

Work was underway with the Enhanced Schools to reposition funding to target earlier support and outreach. There was a SEN service review underway and once completed would give a different service to Schools. There would be a new team advising and a triage system with the One Point panel offering more support. Further feedback would be provided at the next Schools Forum meeting.

D McConnell

9. NATIONAL FUNDING FORMULA UPDATE

A Bryson explained that there had been no further communications around the revised national funding formula.

10. HIGH NEEDS SUB GROUP UPDATE

S Symington, in her role as Chair of the sub group gave a verbal update. The minutes of the previous meeting held on 19 June 2017 had been circulated prior to the meeting. It was explained that the sub group's focus was to investigate the outstanding action

from the previous project: out of borough provision. This had been the first meeting to look at the new project. The next meeting would be held 19 September 2017 where an action plan would hopefully be created. Further updates would be provided at each Schools Forum meeting.

11. CALENDAR OF MEETING DATES AND PROGRAMME OF WORK FOR THE YEAR AHEAD

A proposed calendar of meeting dates had been circulated prior to the meeting.

RESOLVED to approve the calendar of meeting dates and programme of work for the year ahead.

12. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

There were no other items to discuss.

13. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

RESOLVED that the next meeting would be held at 1:30pm on Tuesday 17 October 2017 at The Education Centre in Stockton Sixth Form College.