

SCHOOLS FORUM
MEETING HELD ON 3 JULY 2018

PRESENT:

Primary School Headteachers: Mrs S Richardson, Mrs C Taylor, Mr E Squire and Mr A Ruffell

Primary School Governors: Mr C Wilson

Secondary School Governor: Mr J Thompson

Academy Representatives: Mr S White and Mrs L Spellman

Special School Representative: Mrs C Thomas (Substitute)

Pupil Referral Unit Representative: Mrs E Carr

14 – 19 Representative: Mr P Cook

LA Representative: Cllr C Clark

Trade Union Representative: Mr L Russell

Officials: Mr D New – Senior Finance Manager
 Mr G Waller - Accountant
 Mr A Bryson – Finance Manager
 Mrs D Merrett – Chief Advisor
 Mrs E Barrett – Secretary to the Schools Forum

Also in attendance: Ms L Sweeting – Observer ESFA
 Mr A Metcalfe – Observer Teesside Gazette

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 E Huntington, Mrs C Prendagast, Mrs G Booth, Mr C Walker, Ms D McConnell, Cllr A McCoy, Mr M Gray and Mrs J Gair.

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. **APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR**

RESOLVED that L Russell be appointed as Chair for a two year period.

Vice Chair
Agenda

5. **MINUTES FROM THE LAST MEETING 23 JANUARY 2018**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 23 January 2018 be approved as a true record.

6. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

There were no matters arising.

E Squire joined the meeting.

7. DESIGNATED OFFICER POST 2018/19

A Bryson referred to the previously circulated paper on the Designated Officer Post. The following was highlighted:

Last year it had been agreed that the post of Designated Officer would be joint funded with Hartlepool LA. The LA have requested funding for 2018/19. Appendix A had been presented to Secondary Headteacher's Group and at Education Matters. It had been agreed in principle to continue with the post and was therefore recommended to joint fund the post in 2018/19.

The cost to Stockton LA would be £34k with the remainder paid by Hartlepool LA. The 2017/18 costs had been apportioned per School based on pupil numbers. At Education Matters it had been questioned whether it would be fairer to apportion costs based on pupil premium rather than numbers on roll. Appendix B provided a cost comparison for both costed options. It was noted that there was a small difference.

It was questioned what the line management arrangements were for the Designated Officer Post. This was unclear however as the post holder was employed through Hartlepool LA it would likely be a local arrangement in that authority. It was agreed that there needed to be value for money. Headteacher's would be best placed to answer any questions around impact of provision. The Chief Advisor noted that there had been emails received after Education Matters in support of the provision of this post. It was agreed that it was useful to have a link between Schools and Social Care.

RESOLVED to continue to part fund the role of Designated Officer Post.

Members discussed the options for apportioning funding. ***It was questioned what the rationale was for using pupil premium for funding.*** This had been raised as an alternative way of charging Schools at Education Matters, however the members did not feel that this would be a better option. There were other groups of children other than pupil premium that may need support. It would be difficult to manage this through pupil premium.

RESOLVED that the Designated Officer post would continue to be funded through Schools on a numbers on roll calculation.

8. 2017/18 SCHOOLS BUDGET OUTTURN

A Bryson referred to the previously circulated papers on the 2017/18 budget outturn. The following was highlighted:

Schools Budget

- There were no new items for members to note, all had been previously reported;
- There was an overall deficit of £1.43 million which equated to a higher deficit than previously reported of £1.2 million. The details for the variances were outlined in Appendix 1;
- The majority of the overspend related to high needs funding where an overall £2.5 million deficit was noted, this would be discussed at agenda item 10;
- Savings in year had offset some of the deficits. £480k from the surplus carry forward, £313k due to fewer Schools accessing growth funding and £301k for lower payments for early years and two year old offer;

- ***It was questioned if line c showed an under spend or over spend.*** D New confirmed this should be an over spend of £764k;

School Balances

- There was an increase of £347k noted in Schools balances at the end of 2017/18. This equated to an increase from 5.2% to 6.44%;
- There were 14 Primary and 1 Secondary School recording an excess balance, all had applied for a surplus license and all had been approved;
- There was one School with a reported deficit, this was lower than the previous year;
- Overall maintained School balances stood at £4.009 million.

RESOLVED that Schools Forum note the position for 2017 – 2018.

9. SCHEME FOR FINANCING SCHOOLS

A Bryson referred to the previously circulated report. The following was highlighted. In December 2015 and March 2018 updates were published by the DfE. Stockton's Scheme for Financing Schools had been updated to reflect the changes. There had been some directed changes which had been noted in section 4 and 5 of the report.

The December changes had not applied to Stockton however still needed to be added to the Scheme. Within the March update there had been changes to legislation which included changes to names and departments. Overall there had been no change to the process. The updated Scheme for Financing Schools for Stockton had been published today within the LA. ***In response to a question***, it was noted that Appendix C referred to maintained Schools only.

RESOLVED to note the changes to the document.

10. HIGH NEEDS

D New referred to the previously circulated paper and the following was highlighted:

Introduction

High Needs block was one of four blocks within the Designated Schools Grant (DSG). This was grant funded and covered costs for children and young people up to 25 years old with special educational needs (SEN). The budget was used across seven areas as denoted in the report.

Financial Position

There was a £2.5 million over spend on the High Needs Block relating mainly to top ups and out of borough provision. There had been an increase in the high needs spend which had been offset previously by a transfer of funds from the Schools Block of £5 million. The graph shows the upward trajectory of high need spend. In January 2018, Schools Forum agreed to a transfer of 0.5% from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block which equated to £617k. The upwards trajectory showed that there would still be a larger overspend. The transfer of funds in the current year may be restricted with the introduction of the National Funding Formula.

It was not anticipated that central funding would be increased next year with cash static for 2019 / 20. A flexible approach was needed.

Work so far to manage the budget

- The SEND strategy would be launched in September 2018;
- There was a need to recover the over spend and move onto a more sustainable footing;

- The LA were moving to Enhanced Mainstream Schools from Additional Resourced Provision;
- A joint commissioning strategy was being developed;
- A new Edge of Care provision had been introduced;
- CMAP process had been revised;
- A Scrutiny Review led by LA members was looking at the significant increase in pupil exclusions;
- A Pupil Inclusion Panel (PIP) had been established;
- More specialist places were being sourced;
- A workshop event had been held through the SSEB with over 60 participants. An appendix was included in the report that outlined the discussions and any actions. There were a number of strands that linked into projects within the LA including the SWIS review;
- ***It was questioned how much money was being spent on excluded pupils from the high needs budget as this meant less for SEN pupils.*** This was a piece of work that would need to be undertaken by the finance team; D New
- It was agreed that this level of scrutiny was required as changes and patterns to exclusions would impact the high needs budget pot especially if there were limited places to allocate within the LA. D New agreed that this work could be done and shown over a 24 month period and associated costs; D New
- ***It was questioned how much was spent on Home Education.*** It was explained that the safeguarding aspect was covered by the LA attendance team who visit all families who have elected for home education to ensure that safeguarding is in place, there had been an increase in the numbers of children being educated at home; D New
- ***It was questioned if individual Schools could be highlighted who contribute more to the costs in the high needs pot;*** D New
- ***Enhanced Mainstream Schools were a large part of the strategy, was there a projection for impact within the high needs budget that could be brought back to Schools Forum.*** D New

Appendix

D New referred to the appendix which detailed the discussion topics and actions. The following was highlighted:

1. SEND strategy – focus on child's lived experience and keeping local. ***It was questioned if this would be launched in summer 2018.*** It would likely be Autumn 2018. It was key that Schools understood the strategy prior to implementation;
2. School Accountability – to confirm how money is being spent;
3. Provision for excluded pupils – managing the significant increase in PEX students including local agreements and increases in partnership places at Bishopton. The PIP to support managed moves. ***It was questioned if this was a low impact as stated.*** It was agreed that this could be reviewed and moved to a higher risk rating as there was a significant increase in the number of PEX students. There was concern around the term local agreement as some Secondary Schools / Academy Trusts would not participate and this was specific to just Stockton. ***It was questioned who was monitoring this action plan.*** This was yet to be determined. D New
It was also discussed that an additional column should be added to the plan which highlighted the responsible person for each action. A graph which showed the trends and impacts of all actions would be useful. Intended savings per action would also be a useful addition to the plan. It was agreed that this was a positive position to be moving forward with;
4. Joint Commissioning – this included health and the EHCP panel. There was a new health visitor provider;
5. Post 16;
6. School Ready – links to health and early assessments;
7. Capacity to improve practice – an appointment had been made from the SEN grant funding effective 1 July 2018 to share good practice. This was a positive

- appointment and had been well received;
8. Specialist provision – this was linked to the SEND strategy and the Enhanced Mainstream School. The key was to provide the specialist provision locally rather than out of borough;
 9. Commissioning arrangements – the NE12 needs to work better in this area;
 10. Early Help – engage with SWIS around early help. A new appointment had been made within this team;
 11. Banding system and criteria – a review around top ups.

These were the suggestions from the workshop. D New was seeking Schools Forum support of the action plan.

RESOLVED that Schools Forum support the development of an Action Plan based on the Appendix.

11. FUTURE MEETING DATES

A draft calendar and proposed programme of work for the year ahead had been circulated prior to the meeting. This was based on the previous calendar.

RESOLVED to approve the annual calendar of meeting dates.

12. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

There was no further business to discuss.

13. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

RESOLVED that the next meeting would be held at 1:30pm on 23 October 2018 at The Education Centre in Stockton Sixth Form College.