

Minutes of a meeting of the Leicestershire Schools' Forum held at County Hall, Glenfield on Thursday, 20 June 2013.

PRESENT

Tim Moralee – in the Chair

Brian Myatt Alex Green	Secondary Academy Headteachers
	Secondary Academy Governors
Julie Kennedy	Primary Academy Governor
Heather Sewell	Maintained Primary Headteachers
David Thomas Jean Lewis Tony Gelsthorpe	Maintained Primary Governors
John Bassford	Maintained Secondary Governor
JoAnne Rees	Special Governor
Brenda Carson	RC Diocesan
	Special Representative
	Trade Union Representative
In attendance	Councillor Ivan Ould – Lead Member for Children & Young People's Service Lesley Hagger – Interim Director, Children & Young People's Service Jenny Lawrence – CYPS Finance Business Partner Charlie Palmer – Head of Strategy, Education of Vulnerable Groups Keith Howkins – Education Funding Agency Harninder Brench – Education Funding Agency David McVean – Education Funding Agency Bryn Emerson – note taker

1. Apologies for absence/Substitutions.

Sue Horn, David Lloyd, Andy Reeve, Karen Allen and Sonia Singleton.

1. Minutes of the Previous Meeting and matters arising.

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 February 2013 were agreed with the following amendment:

Page 1 – Mr Ould’s name was omitted from the attendance list.

J Lewis reported that Graham Bett had now retired. J Lawrence stated that he was therefore no longer eligible to sit on Schools’ Forum.

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were made. The Chair also welcomed colleagues from the Education Funding Agency.

3. Update on Behaviour Partnerships.

C Palmer presented this item and gave a brief outline of the paper.

One of the main achievements was long term partnerships and working relationships between schools and the LA and achieving better provision for young people.

C Palmer credited B Myatt and secondary colleagues for their time and hard work.

J Bassford said this was an excellent piece of work and raised a question about index deprivation – what is going to replace it? C Palmer responded that FSM6 (any child that has had free school meals in the last 6 years) would replace it. J Lawrence to ensure data drive this formula is same types of drivers for school formula – pull out some more indicators, something that benchmarks. J Lawrence to use DfE data set for testing some of the deprivation data we have.

B Myatt raised concern to suddenly change formula impact significantly on allocation could be quite detrimental. J Lawrence gave assurance that allocations now and basis allocation 2013/14 unchanged, but formula would be updated future period.

J Lewis said this was excellent work and asked how far the LA had got to extending behaviour partnerships to primary level. C Palmer responded that primary partnerships do exist but are not as effective, as primary are a much larger group of schools to work with. Also have to work with schools who have now received delegated money what they want to do collectively. This will be a locality driven agenda. LA will certainly support and encourage them. B Myatt reported on the Blaby and Harborough development of vulnerable family forums. Getting pretty instant help – if successful, those children identified much earlier – really joined up thinking for the first time with multi agencies, really rich and working well, evidenced already in the Blaby district. Intervention taking place for the first time with vulnerable families.

L Hagger reported on a recent successful event in Blaby bringing together schools in the local area working with and supporting families and early help services within the Department rolled out across County. Information to go out to schools before the end of term.

The Chair highlighted how many hours Partnership Chairs had put in to make the plans work and incredibly successful.

4. Revised Leicestershire Scheme for Financing Schools.

J Lawrence presented the revised paper for Schools’ Forum approval and

highlighted 2 local changes:

- 1 The issuing of Notice of Concern – to ensure the Local Authority's financial position is protected given, deficit on sponsored conversion falls back to the Local Authority.
- 2 Clarity around the treatment of LA loans to schools, as part of the academy conversion process.

There were no comments received from schools by the end of the consultation period.

H Sewell reported difficulty trying to find out where to send Schools Financial Value Statements and asked if there was a mechanism/link to send these to. J Lawrence acknowledged a number of queries from schools and said in future she would be issuing reminders.

D Thomas expressed disappointment to see no comments from schools to the consultation and asked how many comments had been received from people around the table. J Lawrence confirmed the most responses ever had to a change was 4.

Maintained schools – talked at length about reclaiming balances for schools – any money claimed back then goes into the general pot for all schools – is there any evidence for academy schools?

K Howkins reported that the previously quite tight restrictions had recently been lifted.

D Thomas asked - do we need a restriction on maintained schools?

J Lawrence stated that the scheme to control balances was no longer a mandatory requirement. Last time scheme agreed at that time mechanism to control balances. Level of balances schools hold are not triggering by these thresholds.

The Chair asked the Forum to vote on the proposal to remove any restrictions on school balances (maintained schools only) – 4 voted for, 0 opposed and 0 abstentions.

Agreed - J Lawrence to amend the document and re-circulate to Schools' Forum members. With that amendment vote in favour of approving the scheme - 8 in favour, 0 against, 0 abstentions.

5. Schools Forum Membership - September 2013

J Lawrence referred to an error in the paper, paragraph 10, first column – the current membership should read - 3 maintained governors and 4 maintained headteachers.

Academy schools to inform the LA how they wish to be represented on Schools' Forum. J Lawrence said it was not the LA role to specify to academies whether members should be headteachers or governors, academies to make that decision themselves.

D Thomas said it would be useful to have list of who each side, able to represent academies and asked if there was any flexibility on 12 July deadline? D Thomas also asked who the academy members were as referred to in point 3.

J Lawrence confirmed the LA would be using information held by the Governor Development Service, although she was aware not 100% coverage of academies. There would be some flexibility, although the LA would like to complete asap, and would therefore be asking academies for a response by 12 July deadline in order to get the process underway to hold elections in September and ensure implementation of the new Schools' Forum membership.

D Thomas asked - is there another representative body going to be involved?

T Moralee – no – nearly all secondary. Meeting tomorrow with headteachers of academies and happy to collate as Chair of LSH.

H Sewell raised concern that LPH had already met. J Kennedy asked whether there was a mechanism at County Hall, whereby all groups/schools could be contacted, a direct route to deal with the timeline?

J Lawrence responded this would be possible through the Governor Development Service, although the LA had not got details all academies.

D McVean said that any gaps in academy contact details the EFA would be more than happy to provide.

Schools' Forum noted the revised membership numbers and were asked to note the election process for academy headteachers and governors to form.

6. 2012/13 Schools Budget Outturn

J Lawrence talked through each section of the paper reporting the final outturn position on schools budget for 2012/13.
DSG underspend of £4.072M.

Questions raised:

B Myatt referred to £2M SEN saving – medium to long term provision for children, limited spaces, and asked what C Palmer's thought where? Places fill up very quickly, plan b, how will that impact on long term provision?

C Palmer responded that these savings were due to better local provision and referred to The Braunstone facility – young people educated locally, previously out county places, suiting them better and costing the LA less.

Mr Ould reported on the development of the Braunstone project – Bungalow 66 and said it had been a real privilege to open this unit. By developing this provision had cut the average cost from £75,000 to £35,000, but has to be need appropriate. Mr Ould reported there was already discussion taking place regarding a number of children in our schools with mental health problems. School budget provide for that. Supporting Families agenda £1.5M into the pot.

L Hagger referred to the Invest to Save approach and said the future was in developing in-house provision in Leicestershire. C Palmer agreed to prepare a paper on the potential for Invest to Save for a future meeting.

Schools' Forum agreed the proposal for the LA not to allocate 2013/14 budget but to move forward into 2014/15. Proposal to set aside £200,000 to support behaviour partnerships – to have conversations with partnership what most appropriate allocation of that funding, so that partnership ready and able to delegate from September.

Issues to consider:

How best to use unallocated DSG balance of almost £1.9M.

Still have some risks within the budget:

- Residual costs of Hospital School provision now resolved.
- Non maintained special schools considering large fee increases had now been resolved and do not anticipate that to happen.

Academy conversion underspend retained and used to contribute to 2014/15 budget.

The Chair asked the Forum to:

- 1 Note the outcome of figures.
- 2 Note the DSG reserve and proposals in the paper.

7. School Funding Arrangements 2014/15

J Lawrence presented a report outlining the DFE's proposals for 2014/15 and what that means for Leicestershire Formula. The outcome of the Spending Review next week.

A number of things moving forward in 2014/15.

- Already committed to reviewing the formula.
- Deprivation – need to do some modelling to look whether changes are necessary.
- £150,000 lump sum for all schools.
- Sparsity – need to test out from modelling, how it works.
- Rent – limited to 5% of schools. Impact for some of those schools could be significant.

Will need to come back to Schools' Forum to reaffirm decisions in 2013/14 process to be set again for 2014/15. Likely to reconfigure the working group in developing the formula for 2014/15.

Prior Attainment

A Green raised a question - level 5 KS1 and 2 – will be removed, therefore need to consider a different factor. Will there be full representation on that group?

J Lawrence confirmed there would be.

Mr Ould asked for clarification regarding pupils with prior attainment – position

of young people who come into the County on a daily basis, and only reflected when we send return in.

J Lawrence responded - taken at one point during academic year, one-off measurement any particular moment in time. Those important pupils will be picked up.

H Sewell – prior attainment – might find also of change for stage 1. First year, new system. Bar has changed from previous years.

K Howkins – yes could be a change in this year’s cohort, added on to existing, quarter of the effect, looking at all pupils in the school, this year’s cohort being measured at the moment. That will be tagged on to existing cohort under the existing cohort.

D Thomas – new factor for sparsity – old school protection – significant impact. Have we got larger primary schools represented? Would be happy to represent if a shortage. J Lawrence said there was a number of issues to be considered. Sparsity factor, £100,000 or tapered, now have data, never intended to replace what used to have with previous small school factor.

Sparsity factors restricted inside Leicestershire or across the border. J Lawrence advised - starts from pupils nearest to that primary school - doesn’t respect County boundaries.

D McVean – the Department isn’t struggling to introduce a National Funding formula. Is trying to recognise in rural areas there are some factors that the lump sum can be blunt in helping to solve. Sparsity factor “to give smaller hammer to crack a smaller nut”.

Age range changes

Recommendation is to go back to effectively the old 5/12 7/12 count for pupils of previous census counts. More meetings planned to work with the EFA. ESG recruitment for academies will be recouped in the same way as we recalculate it – issue now resolved.

Consultation – change affects schools 2014/15 – need to be aware of it happening. May be difficult to manage locally.

J Lawrence will update on progress.

T Gelsthorpe asked any indication from this year’s admission likely patterns parental choice and pupil movement? Looked and identified some trends, initial modelling done is not cost neutral. Have to have individual conversations with all schools affected by this. Need some validation process, can’t have inflated numbers in there.

K Howkins – application to put in request for transitional arrangements and or some provision to correct estimates if differ, funding still needs to reflect actual numbers, still want to stick with using numbers.

A Green – understands Leicestershire situation specific - 3 tier systems rather than 2 tier, around 10+. Could reduce by quarter – any phased working that can be done for schools. Decreasing budget is unmanageable. If EFA, LA and

schools consider some sort of strategic support – great benefit. K Howkins – still got to be funded from your pot, but may be contingency available within DSG. There are these sorts of changes in other parts of the country. Needs strategic role around the systems.

T Gelsthorpe – 10+ issue. Small 11-16 schools issue around curriculum KS4 extremely expensive, has to be thought about.

D Thomas – if school expanding itself, it's a business risk. Is this going to be ring fenced into areas or are all Leicestershire schools affected as it's funded through DSG?

T Moralee – children going to be in different locations, might be significant moving to one school – manageability.

Mr Ould, Chair of National Employers Union – governors fed up one year financial rewards to school (para 25) – another school attracting staff with no money. Financial viability of schools. Will have to work together to determine how to take this forward. If school can't retain it's pupil distinguished eventually. LA have to find from corporate centre any cost of redundancies from remaining schools. Schools' Forum going to have to look at this very carefully.

B Carson – Diocese – 2 year process for schools – 11-14 and 11-16 age range, conversation about age range widespread amongst groups of schools in local area be shared.

J Bassford - not my experience.

Consistent education provision across the county.

J Bassford – problem faced with Loughborough – concern a lot of short term thinking going on in institutions, potentially smoking ruins not fit to be educating children. Not possible to run this system without strategic overview.

Down to provision for children in Leicestershire.

A Green – question – money should follow the child assailable. Q – do we have to follow EFA requirements as stated in presentation today? J Lawrence – operational guidance is clear where age range changes expectation LAs will use pupil numbers to reflect that change.

A Green - any opportunity – Forum.

D McVean – we haven't got money to fund the same pupil twice. If that child is in maintained or academy – dept has funded that child somewhere. If creating some ability to form partnerships that's our decision but no pot of money, happy to commit to work. We are all tied by uncertainty of funding, informed intuitive planning. Very limited mechanism in EFA, sudden spurge, to fund some money, but utterly exception. Yes tough but can be planned.

A Green – anything we can do within the school in locality to support schools that might help schools through the transition?

K Howkins – as part of any application where schools losing pupils, take account of funding falling rolls to support them through transition.

J Lawrence - £1.9M may give some capacity to deal with that, to find a local solution to this.

B Carson – principal upper school pushing for adjusting and making plans for staffing – do we have a date yet, looking forward 2014/15 – schools having a reduction would like to know sooner rather than later.

Third point (page 77) - want to look at local solution to minimise impact of age range change, recognising pot of money within Leicestershire to do it. Also need to know contingency, may be some small adjustments. We note the requirements and will work on LA solutions.

B Myatt - some partnerships people working together and have a solution already. Some thinking going on in certain areas.

J Lewis – like to look at the very bottom end of numbers – PRU partnership workings – information about numbers coming in at 4+ great variations in places needed throughout Leicestershire. Better information about children entering.

The Chair – accept 3 recommendations as they stand.

The Forum noted the recommendations, 0 opposed.

Point 4 – Forum will be undertaking to

- 1 Recognise the thinking to minimise the impact of significant changes.
2. Create proposal to manage age range changes and impact across the County.
3. Look at the capacity to predict numbers at all levels in schools and impact that has on planning.

8. Any other business.

The Chair thanked colleagues from the EFA for their input. Really helpful to move the meeting along and offer of colleagues to work with.

K Howkins gave thanks to J Lawrence in appreciation of paper very clear in stating that the tables identifying who the issues affected and what actions were needed by who is setting best practice.

9. Date of Next Meeting

Monday 8 July at 2.30pm at Beaumanor Hall – an informal open discussion on age range changes – to bring back information what happening in groups.

Wednesday 18 September at 2.00pm at Beaumanor Hall.

