

Leicestershire Schools' Forum
Notes of the Meeting held on Monday 23 February 2015, 2.00 pm
at Beaumanor Hall

Present

Tim Moralee Brian Myatt Sonia Singleton	Secondary Academy Headteacher
Suzanne Uprichard Michael Murphy Bill Nash	Secondary Academy Governors
David Lloyd Heather Sewell	Primary Maintained Headteachers
Jean Lewis	Primary Academy Governor
Tony Gelsthorpe David Thomas	Primary Maintained Governor
Heather Stretton	Trade Union Representative
Suzanne Uprichard	PRU Representative
Chris Davies	RC Representative
Ian Sharpe	CE Representative

In attendance:

Ivan Ould, Lead Member for Children and Family Services
 Jenny Lawrence, Finance Business Partner, Corporate Resources
 Lesley Hagger, Director, Children and Family Services
 Gill Weston, Assistant Director, Education, Learning and Skills
 Chris Bristow, Strategic Lead SEND Reform, Children and Family Services

		Action
1.	<p>Apologies</p> <p>Apologies were received from Alex Green, Richard Spurr, Alison Deacon and Nigel Leigh.</p>	
2.	<p>Minutes and Matters Arising</p> <p>The minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 4 December 2014 were agreed as a true record subject to an amendment under Any Other Business. The sentence "fair funding for children in England, money £17M to £25M for next year" should read " ... fair funding for children in England, money £17M to £20.5M.</p>	

		Action
<p>3.</p>	<p>Specialist Teaching Service Review</p> <p>Chris Bristow introduced his report on the Specialist Teaching Service Review which sets out an update on the current position.</p> <p>Chris firstly thanked those people involved in this work including workshops held at Primary Heads' meetings and through informal discussions with special school heads/units and SEN governors.</p> <p>Chris outlined the drivers for change and the progress made to date. From the key focus and feedback from the workshops it was clear what the principles are and the key action points for STS that need to be taken. The Council's principle was to be a strategic commissioner of services and Chris outlined the strategic intentions. Chris explained how the funding model diagram worked to Schools' Forum and commented that schools are not sufficiently informed on which option to choose and therefore a further piece of analysis work would be undertaken.</p> <p>Chris informed the meeting that the STS was due to be reviewed and remodelled from September 2014. However because of the complex nature of the teams' functions the timescale had been extended to September 2016.</p> <p>Brian Myatt asked how those risks are identified for the most vulnerable areas or groups which may be affected by this review and gave examples of the risks. Discussion took place on the local offer work and what schools should be providing under each element. Chris added that a transparent debate about this was required to get a clear position statement.</p> <p>Tony Gelsthorpe asked if any commissioning work had been completed with teaching schools. Chris commented there had been some work done in terms of future models and there was an initial presumption they would take a lead role. The role would possibly be looked at with the option of using other teaching services. Bill Nash asked if private firms would be used. Chris said that this was a possibility.</p> <p>David Lloyd commented that he was pleased to hear that mental health for children would be looked at. Chris commented that it was his intention to have an open debate to do the right things for our children.</p>	
<p>4.</p>	<p>2015/16 Schools' Budget</p> <p>Jenny presented the 2015/16 Schools' Budget paper and explained the purpose of the report was to present the 2015/16 Dedicated Schools Grant Settlement for Leicestershire and proposed 2015/16</p>	

Schools' Budget. The Local Authority was seeking approval for a number of recommendations outlined in the report.

Jenny highlighted the following:

- Paragraph 14, item 2 – Jenny referred to the new school funding regulations which fund new schools on estimated pupil numbers and this would be something that Schools' Forum would need to consider. Jenny said that it was anticipated that significant housing developments currently being planned in Leicestershire by 2020 may deliver 17 new primary and 2 new secondary schools and commented on the work to be carried out to ensure financial sustainability. Tony Gelsthorpe referred to the number of schools and asked if they would all be commissioned as academies. Lesley said that all new schools are academies and there would be competition for the operator of these. Suzanne Uprichard asked if the academies would be part of a multi-academy trust or stand alone. Lesley said it would depend on what the potential operator brings to the table and explained the process for how the final decision was reached.
- Paragraph 14, item 3 - Schools' Forum are asked to approve the funding in order for the Local Authority to meet prescribed statutory duties placed upon it. Jenny commented that new costs do not fall on the Premature Retirement costs.
- Paragraph 14, item 4 – Schools' Forum are asked to approve the centrally retained early years funding of £1.687M
- Paragraph 15 – High Needs Block – still the most complex area within the DSG settlement. The EFA have changed their process again for this financial year. By converting the settlement to a per pupil basis Leicestershire is one of the lowest funded authorities against the national average.
- Paragraph 15 – Early Years – Jenny outlined the two elements to the Early Years funding block. The settlement no longer includes funding for FEEE for 2 year olds and this would not be confirmed until June 2015. Jenny commented that there may be a cost implication for the 2 year olds offer.
- Paragraph 16 - Leicestershire was approached by the DFE to take part in a research project to look at how the current SEN funding system was working and to explore the differences in local authority spending patterns. The outcome of the research project was still unknown and what potential changes to the funding system may arise from it.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paragraph 19 – School Budgets – the additional funding has been incorporated into the 2015/16 funding values • Paragraph 20 – Jenny said that there had been a slight change in the criteria the DfE had used around prior attainment. • Paragraph 22 – Jenny commented that there are 23 schools funded at the Minimum Funding Guarantee. • Paragraph 24 – Jenny commented that a number of schools were unhappy with the arrangement regarding pupil number adjustments for schools undertaking age range changes or affected by age range changes in other schools required by the EFA. Schools said they were not aware of these changes and had limited understanding of the changes despite implementation following extensive consultation in 2013. • Paragraph 26 - Jenny commented that communication of changes continues to be a challenge. Tim added that as a former chair of LSH, Forum members used to communicate information into their representative groups. Tim reiterated that schools should ask heads, governors and business managers to make sure information was coming through. Schools' Forum members gave their view on this issue and suggested ways to improve the situation. • Paragraph 30 – Universal Infant Free School Meals – Jenny reported that there was no information on funding from September 2015. • Paragraph 32 – Pupil Premium – the Primary Free School Meals value has increased for 2015/16. Pupil numbers will be based upon pupil numbers the January census. Confirmed allocations are not expected until June 2015. • Paragraph 33 – High Needs Funding – The EFA has changed the pupil count methodology. For 2015/16 exceptional cases where there was identified pupil growth were submitted and as a result there was some growth for Ashmount Special School. • Paragraph 42 – Early Learning and Childcare – Jenny outlined how the Early Learning and Childcare service was funded from DSG but changes to the way in which local authorities are funded for Free Entitlement to Early Education (FEEE) may affect this position. This is a further funding pressure for the Service in addition to savings already to be made. 	
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- Paragraph 51 – Dedicated Schools Grant Reserve – underspend in SEN and nursery funding, high needs not there for 2015/16. Post-16 remains a concern and costs are increasing.
- Paragraph 51 – Academy Deficits – the meeting expressed concern at the funding earmarked for academy deficits. Jenny commented that not all schools in sponsored arrangements have left deficits. Jenny said that following the issuing of a Notice of Concern, closer working with the financial management of the school is put in place with the aim of reducing that liability. Jenny commented that the deficit reverts back to the Local Authority the day before conversion. Sonia Singleton stated that the LA must know the maintained school was in debt and asked what happened before a notice of concern was issued. Jenny outlined the process that takes place which informs them whether the school is in debt.
- Paragraph 55 – The Local Authority Budget – Jenny outlined the key areas for growth and savings.

Tim thanked Jenny for her report.

AGREED: That Schools' Forum approve the retention of budgets to meet the prescribed statutory duties of the local authority (Paragraph 14, item 3).

AGREED: That Schools' Forum approve the centrally retained early years funding of £1.687M (paragraph 14, Item 4).

AGREED: That Schools' Forum note the 2015/16 school funding rates (Paragraph 20).

AGREED: That Schools' Forum note the average per pupil funding to be taken into account for recoupment for excluded pupils (Paragraph 29).

AGREED: That Schools' Forum notes the number and average cost of commissioned places for children and young people with High Needs.

AGREED: That Schools' Forum approve the action to be taken in respect of schools where the SEN notional budget is insufficient to meet the aggregated value of High Needs Funding Element 2 (Paragraph 36).

AGREED: That Schools' Forum note the retention of the Dedicated Schools Grant Reserve and the purposes for which it will be used (Paragraphs 50-53).

	AGREED: That Schools' Forum note the payment rates for the Early Years Single Funding formula (Paragraph 49).	
5.	<p>Any Other Business</p> <p>a) David Lloyd questioned the closing of Sure Start provision and the potential impact on families. Lesley explained that as part of the £13.2M savings across early years, of which £3.5M was Sure Start, work is to be carried out on making sure we are commissioning the right services for the right children. Lesley added that there have not been any Sure Start Centres closed.</p> <p>b) Mr Ould gave a brief summary regarding fairer funding due to be discussed with the F40 delegation and Nick Gibb.</p>	
6.	<p>Date of Next Meetings</p> <p>Thursday 18 June 2015, 2.00 pm Monday 21 September 2015. 2.00 pm</p> <p>Both at Beaumanor Hall.</p>	