

Minutes of a meeting of the Leicestershire Schools' Forum held at Beaumanor Hall on Wednesday 5 October 2016 at 2.00 pm

Present

Nick Goforth	Secondary Academies Headteacher
Kath Kelly	Secondary Academies Headteacher
Callum Orr	Secondary Academies Headteacher
Suzanne Uprichard	Secondary Academies Governor / PRU
Bill Nash	Secondary Maintained Governor
Jane McKay	Primary Academy Headteacher
Stephen Cotton	Primary Academy Headteacher
Karen Rixon	Primary Academy Headteacher
Jean Lewis	Primary Academy Governor
David Thomas	Primary Academy Governor
Heather Sewell	Primary Maintained Headteacher
Jo Blackburn	Primary Maintained Headteacher
Karen Allen	Primary Maintained Headteacher
Michael Wilson	Primary Maintained Governor
Tony Gelsthorpe	Primary Maintained Governor
Ian Sharpe	Church of England Representative
Catherine Drury	Early Years Provider
Graham Bett	JCC Representative

In attendance

Paul Meredith, Director, Children and Family Services
 Jenny Lawrence, Finance Business Partner, Corporate Resources
 Ivan Ould, Lead Member, Children and Family Services
 David Atterbury, Head of Strategy, Education Sufficiency

		Action
1.	<p>Membership Update</p> <p>Jenny introduced the report which provided a membership update for the Schools' Forum. Jenny outlined those members who were eligible for re-election as their four year term of office had come to an end. Given the uncertain future of schools funding and the Schools' Forum Jenny asked for the Forum's views and support that Leicestershire extend those members whose time had expired.</p>	

	<p>Jenny added that following a resignation a vacancy had arisen for a secondary academy governor and Leicestershire Secondary Heads had been approached to seek nominations.</p> <p>Schools' Forum supported the actions of the local authority with regard to membership from September 2016.</p> <p>Schools' Forum supported the local authority's intention to extend the terms of office.</p>	
2.	<p>Election of Chair and Vice Chair</p> <p>Karen Allen was elected Chair of the Schools' Forum for the 2016/17 academic year.</p> <p>Suzanne Uprichard was elected Vice Chair of the Schools' Forum for the 2016/17 academic year.</p>	
3.	<p>Apologies for absence/Substitutions</p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Sonia Singleton, Dave Hedley, Steve McDonald, Jason Brooks and Chris Davies.</p> <p>There were no substitutions.</p>	
4.	<p>Minutes and Matters Arising</p> <p>The minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 21 June 2016 were agreed subject to an amendment on page 10, agenda item 6 (High Needs Funding), paragraph 6 should read "David Atterbury commented that place planning was a more expensive provision out of county ...revenue expenses".</p> <p>Matters Arising</p> <p><u>Forum Membership</u> The representation of Secondary Academy Headteachers was raised and Schools' Forum noted there are 6 nominated Governors, 4 of which are members of the Schools' Forum.</p> <p><u>Children and Family Services</u> Paul Meredith updated the Schools' Forum on the interim appointment to the Department to replace Chris Bristow as strategic lead for SEND. Christine Finnigan would be joining the Department on 24 October as strategic lead for SEND and Children with Disabilities. The job description had been adjusted to include children disability services to allow links to be made between SEND and children's social care. Paul outlined that as part of Christine's brief she would be developing a multi-agency strategy and setting up a SEND Forum in order to help deliver the SEND Strategy. Paul asked the Forum to appreciate that this was a long-term plan as the current model was not sustainable.</p>	

Unfortunately a new director was not appointed and therefore the appointment process will reconvene. Paul added that the other priority was to undertake a new structure for the Department as soon as possible. Paul outlined the Assistant Director structure and informed the meeting that adverts that would be going out for these posts.

SEND

Jean Lewis raised concerns about the difficulties of engaging NHS representatives to work with SEN pupils in schools. Paul confirmed that the relationship between CFS and Health is a matter that needs to be addressed as part of SEND Reform and work to take place on the high needs action plan.

Karen Allen commented that it was really heartening that the local authority recognise that there are a number of reasons for increasing high need expenditure including out of county provision as schools were receiving mixed messages around schools pushing up costs and pressing for specialist provision. Calculating the actual cost of additional provision has pushed the price over £6,000 and has led to increasing costs.

Paul said that high costs placements were being looked at and that transport was a significant factor. Jean Lewis commented that there was a lack of provision for autistic placements. David Atterbury commented that this was the gap we are trying to close and stated that there was a free school bid at the moment to do this.

Jenny commented that the cost and numbers had gone up across the board and outlined some of the costs.

Karen Rixon commented that the diagnosis levels for children and young people are immense resulting in escalating pressure for schools.

Paul reiterated that health was a very important part of this process but more joined up working with health was needed.

Jean Lewis commented that the new appointee should look at both sides of the SEND problem and bring in the health professionals. There are threats to cut transport for those children who have disabilities. Paul commented that no decision had been made on transport costs but had noted the comment.

Graham asked if there was any invest to save money for this particular problem. Jenny commented that there is not at the moment and cannot present an Invest to Save now but could do so in the future. Graham expressed his disappointment for this not to be included in the allocation for the County Council's 2016/17 underspend. Jenny commented that there is funding for invest to save if schemes were supported and evidenced within a business case.

	<p>Suzanne asked what plans there are to speak to the CCG's NHS England about issues around the over prescribing children going back to school and the removal of specialist nursing.</p> <p>Paul said that partnership working with health was under developed and meetings were currently taking place with NHS colleagues.</p> <p>The Forum asked for Christine Finnigan to bring a progress report to the next Schools' Forum.</p>	PM/CF
5.	<p>2015/16 Maintained School Balances</p> <p>Jenny introduced the report which sets out the position with regard to school balances for all schools that were maintained by the local authority on 31 March 2016 and the 2015/16 financial year.</p> <p>Jenny commented that it was disappointing that the EFA do not publish the same information for academies and was therefore difficult to draw conclusions.</p> <p>Schools' Forum noted the position on the 2015/16 school balances for local authority maintained schools.</p>	
6.	<p>2017/18 School Funding</p> <p>Jenny introduced the report which presents an update on 2017/18 school funding taking into account the schools, High Needs and Early Years Blocks of the Dedicated Schools Grant and the funding formula for maintained schools and academies.</p> <p>Jenny said that the changes for 2017/18 were still unknown and phase 2 of the consultation had not happened; a further announcement was expected in the autumn. The DfE have confirmed that local authorities would be funded at the same rate per pupil as for 2016/17; that movements between the schools and the high needs block would be permissible with an expectation that local authorities should consult with schools and agree any proposals with the Schools' Forum.</p> <p>In order to plan for 2017/18 a working group met to look at options to the local authority. Jenny said that the schools represented at the working group agreed in principle to the local authority retaining headroom to meet rising SEN costs and therefore maintaining school budgets for 2016/17. Jenny said that it was estimated that headroom of £3M existed within the schools' block and the local authority proposed that this would be transferred to offset high needs pressures.</p> <p>In July the DfE launched a consultation on early years' national formula. The local authority submitted a response and work was being undertaken with early years' colleagues on the changes to be implemented in 2017/18.</p>	

Paul Meredith outlined the reasons for the local authority taking this difficult decision to use the £3M to meet the rising SEN costs. The proposal would be included in the Councils 2017/18 budget proposals.

Nick Goforth referred to paragraph 14 in the report and commented that some of this headroom should be used to address the key stage 3 funding position. Nick asked if the County Councillors were aware of how bad key stage 3 was funded. Mr Ould acknowledged they were and this was an ongoing problem with central government regarding grants being cut and additional responsibilities.

Kath Kelly sought clarification with regard to bullet point 2 on page 24 of the report and asked if there was a possibility or discussion that this would become significant next year. Jenny commented that there were no proposed further cuts for 2017/18.

David Thomas stated that the local authority or schools do not want to pick up the costs on SEN however it was not the schools who created the situation.

Karen Allen referred to bullet point 2 of number 8 in the report regarding viring between blocks. Karen stated that the opportunity to vire between blocks was good for the County Council but not good for the schools. Karen felt that Schools' Forum was not consulted and they were notified. Has that changed as this was suggesting this was agreed with Schools' Forum.

Paul stated that it was the County Council's decision and the guidance was to consult with partners and the Schools' Forum.

Callum Orr commented that there was nothing in the legislation that the Schools' Forum had to agree. The local authority should consult and agree but in terms of legislation the Schools' Forum has no decision making powers over this decision.

A further discussion took place on how the £3M headroom in DSG might be utilised. Paul confirmed that this was not made available to address the high needs block overspend then further actions to cuts to services may have to take place elsewhere. In this sense the DSG headroom provided a unique opportunity.

Karen Allen then called for a show of hands to determine Forum's view on use of the funding. This confirmed 0 were in favour of moving all of the funding to the high needs block, 13 had a preference for all or a sizeable proportion to go to Key Stage 3, and there were 2 abstentions.

A further discussion ensued whether the 1% reduction in AWPU for the previous year was permanent and if schools had any influence over the 2017/18 budget. Jenny confirmed that the 1% reduction will not be reinstated.

	<p>Discussion took place on how significant the IDACI bandings are. Jenny commented that she did not think they were significant and that the EFA had tweaked how they would deal with the bandings since the confirmation from the DfE that local authorities would be funded at the same rate per pupil as for 2016/17.</p> <p>Graham Bett highlighted paragraph 16 of the report and suggested that as a result of today's discussion would it be more appropriate for the Director to ask for money from the £15M.</p> <p>Paul commented that the Council would save a plan or proposal the Schools' Forum could put forward but would be a separate issue as to whether it would be approved. The key is for all partners to sign up to the strategy. Callum Orr asked who was actually coming out with that plan. Paul commented that Leicestershire was and this would be the area of responsibility for the local authority in the future.</p> <p>Jean Lewis asked if there was a legal ruling that we must continue to fund special schools by formula funding. Jenny replied that there has never been anything specific to fund SEN and that funding in the formula in 2013 was aligned to special educational needs. Jenny added that there will be schools that will have notional SEN budgets but no children with SEN.</p> <p>Schools' Forum noted the content of the report.</p>	
7.	<p>Any Other Business</p> <p>There was no further business.</p>	
8.	<p>Date of Next Meeting</p> <p>Monday 5 December 2016, 2.00 – 4.00 pm at Beaumanor Hall.</p> <p>Future dates:</p> <p>Thursday 9 February 2017 Monday 12 June 2017</p> <p>All dates from 2.00 – 4.00 pm at Beaumanor Hall.</p>	