

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

Present

Kath Kelly	Secondary Academies Headteacher
Callum Orr	Secondary Academies Headteacher
Sonia Singleton	Secondary Academies Headteacher
Dave Hedley	Secondary Academies Governor
Bill Nash	Secondary Maintained Governor
Jane McKay	Primary Academy Headteacher
Karen Rixon	Primary Academy Headteacher
Jean Lewis	Primary Academy Governor
David Thomas	Primary Academy Governor
Jo Blackburn	Primary Maintained Headteacher
Karen Allen	Primary Maintained Headteacher
Michael Wilson	Primary Maintained Governor
Tony Gelsthorpe	Primary Maintained Governor
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
 Christine Finnigan, Head of Strategy, SEND and Disabled Children

		Action
1.	<p>Apologies for absence/Substitutions</p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Chris Davies, Catherine Drury, Suzanne Uprichard, Nick Goforth, Stephen Cotton, Ian Sharpe, Steve McDonald and Heather Sewell.</p> <p>There were no substitutions.</p>	

<p>2.</p>	<p>Minutes and Matters Arising</p> <p>The minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 5 October 2016 were agreed subject to an amendment on page 10, agenda item 6 (2017/18 School Funding), last paragraph should read “Jean Lewis asked if there was a legal ruling that we must continue to fund special needs in mainstream schools by formula funding”.</p> <p>Jean Lewis made the comment that some schools have notional SEN budgets but no children to spend it on and that funding should be by need as opposed to formula.</p> <p>Matters Arising</p> <p>Jenny outlined the discussions that had taken place at the working group to look at the 2017/18 options to the local authority and said that representatives were not in favour of the £3M being transferred to the high needs block. The working group had also asked if the local authority would consider this again.</p> <p>David Thomas commented that it was unfortunate that the working group met a couple of days after the last Schools’ Forum and not before today’s meeting to look at the 2017/18 options to the local authority.</p>	
<p>3.</p>	<p>High Needs Update</p> <p>Christine Finnigan introduced herself to the Schools Forum and explained her role as Head of Strategy for Special Educational Needs and Disabled Children (SEND).</p> <p>Christine explained there are a number of workstreams in respect of the high needs budget, the aim of which will be to ensure schools are as inclusive as possible and there is the right specialist provision for those pupils that need it. The work streams include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a review of the Specialist Teaching Services • Reviewing areas in the Special Educational Needs Assessment Service • Special Needs Transport, • SEN provision and • Commissioning. <p>A project board is to be set up to bring all these work streams together; this work is being supported by a SEND Project Manager from the Transformation Unit.</p>	

	<p>Chris informed the meeting that work had started on reviewing the SEN panel which in future will focus on looking at the initial requests for assessment. Work has also started to consider the needs of those children and young people in independent provision, particularly those with higher achieving autism, at key transition points, to see if those needs could be met in maintained provision. Effective Year 9 transition planning was key and work had started on considering this year's Year 11 cohort.</p> <p>Extra posts were being put into the Council's commissioning services in order to improve the quality and best value in independent provision.</p> <p>Chris informed the meeting that provision needed to be reviewed strategically, particularly for higher achieving ASD and emotional, social and mental health needs as these were primarily the children and young people in independent provision – however, a free school bid had been submitted for an ASD provision.</p> <p>Jean Lewis referred to Chris' comment regarding the higher achieving autistic children in the secondary area and asked that some provision for those still in primary school was considered as there was very little input from the Outreach Service.</p> <p>David commented that there is one of two free school bids currently being considered: one from Macintyre. In terms of sufficiency there is a great demand for ASD and as well as the free school bid, consideration was being given to more resource provision in mainstream schools across the geographical area but more work needs to be done on identifying future needs. In terms of the Macintyre bid a decision would be known next April.</p> <p>David explained the preferred model for delivery of SEN places concluding that the expense of developing new area special schools was likely prohibitive. Graham Bett enquired if this statement referred to capital or revenue implications. David confirmed that it was in the context of capital allocations.</p>	
4.	<p>School Funding Update</p> <p>Jenny introduced the report which provided an overview of the 2017/18 Dedicated Schools Grant Settlement, 2017/18 School Funding, the redefinition of 'estimated pupils' in respect of the pupil number adjustment arising for schools undertaking or being affected by age range changes and the impact of the Apprenticeship Levy on schools.</p> <p>Jenny reported that the next phase of consultation was expected in the next few weeks but in terms of the national funding formula no information had been published by the Department for Education.</p>	

Jenny updated the Forum on the early years' national funding formula position and one of the areas that schools needed to be aware of was the proposal that local authority funding will be generated by a formula reflecting pupil characteristics and that 95% of the funding should be delegated to providers also based on pupil characteristics.

Jenny referred to the estimated £3M headroom within the Schools Block and said that it remains the local authority's intention to use this to support the high needs block. There were also changes to the education services grant from 1 September 2017 for local authorities and academies which needed to be reflected in academies' financial planning. The DfE had recently announced a £50M fund for local authorities to continue to monitor and commission school improvement for low performing maintained schools. Jenny commented that at this stage it was not clear whether this was a one-off payment. In addition the DfE had announced a £140M 'Strategic School Improvement Fund' for academies and maintained schools but it was not clear who decides where it is needed and how it would be used. Jenny agreed to inform Schools' Forum when she had more information.

In terms of the high needs block the table on page 18 sets out in more detail the financial projections for the current and two subsequent years. Jenny commented that the high needs block for 2017/18 was provisionally set at £61.88m but the grant was not expected to be confirmed until March 2017.

The local authority was still proposing to make no changes to the school funding formula although two areas may require some minor changes. Firstly to IDACI to reflect the new national bandings which was discussed at the working party and the other area of concern nationally was the rateable value of property as many schools have increased.

Jenny said that there had been clarification of the term estimate in the mechanism for adjusting pupils as a result of the age range changes for 2017/18 which had been discussed with the working group.

Jenny informed the meeting that from April 2017 schools will be affected by the national Apprenticeship Levy and outlined how the different category of school would be affected. There was still a lack of clarity in this area and Jenny agreed to update the Schools' Forum when she received further information.

Paul said that the £3M transfer to high needs had been debated for a number of weeks and last week the final decision was made. The views of the Schools' Forum were taken into account but there is a significant problem on SEND and work was required to work on new models to compound the problem.

	<p>Karen Allen urged officers and members to bear in mind the work schools do to support high needs children and the limitation of the £6K.</p> <p>David Thomas referred to the £3M and suggested it would be worth identifying what the cost would be of this decision to schools. Jenny agreed to look at this.</p> <p>In addition to the changes to IDACI and the increases of rateable values which may result in minor changes to AWPU values Kath Kelly asked if this was preparing for more cuts to come. Jenny commented that there is no proposed cut to the 2017/18 budget. In terms of the rateable value issue Jenny commented that an exercise was being carried out on this as information received was unclear.</p> <p>Referring to the chart on page 18 of the report Karen Rixon asked how the savings had been formulated. Jenny said that the savings were being met from the Dedicated Schools Grant which does not have the same measurement as local authority budgets. Jenny outlined particular areas of savings.</p> <p>David Thomas referred to the term “baseline” and suggested that the £7M was part of the high need block for 2017/18 and £3M resulted in the schools block being short by £10m.</p> <p>Mr Ould reported that the F40 had met and it was difficult to know the current position. The group are due to meet with the Secretary of State for Education to discuss concerns about the delayed consultation on a new national funding formula. The area that concerns the group was the lump sum and if it reduces would affect the viability of some smaller schools.</p>	
5.	<p>Any Other Business</p> <p>a) Schools’ Form Self-Assessment</p> <p>Jenny explained that the DfE had issued new guidance and a self-assessment tool for local authorities to assess the strengths and weaknesses of their Schools’ Forum. Jenny proposed that she circulate the information out to members of the Forum for their views and comments. The Schools’ Forum noted this.</p>	
6.	<p>Date of Next Meetings</p> <p>Thursday 9 February 2017 Monday 12 June 2017</p> <p>All dates from 2.00 – 4.00 pm at Beaumanor Hall</p>	

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