

**Minutes of a meeting of the Leicestershire Schools Forum held at Beaumanor Hall
on Monday 30 September 2019 at 2.00 pm**

Present

Chris Parkinson	Secondary Academies Headteacher
Liam Powell	Secondary Academies Headteacher
Julie McBrearty	Secondary Academies Headteacher
James Tickle	Secondary Academies Headteacher
Chris Swan	Secondary Academies Governor
Martin Towers	Secondary Academies Governor
Suzanne Uprichard	PRU Representative
Jane McKay	Primary Academy Headteacher
Jean Lewis	Primary Academy Governor
David Thomas	Primary Academy Governor
Troy Jenkinson	Primary Maintained Headteacher
Karen Allen	Primary Maintained Headteacher
Claire Allen	Primary Maintained Governor
Zoe Wortley	Primary Maintained Governor
Ros Hopkins	Special Maintained Headteacher
Graham Bett	DNCC Representative

In attendance

Jane Moore, Director of Children and Family Services
 Ivan Ould, Lead Member, Children and Family Services
 David Atterbury, Head of Service, Education Sufficiency
 Alison Bradley, Head of Service, Education Quality and Inclusion
 Jenny Lawrence, Finance Business Partner, Corporate Resources

		Action
1.	<p>Election of Chair and Vice Chair Karen Allen was elected Chair of the Schools Forum for the 2019/20 academic year.</p> <p>Chris Parkinson was elected Vice Chair of the Schools Forum for the 2019/20 academic year.</p>	
2.	<p>Membership</p> <p>It was noted that there was currently 2 Primary Academy Headteacher vacancies; one Primary Academy Headteacher substitute vacancy; one Secondary Academy Headteacher substitute; one Primary Maintained Headteacher vacancy; one Primary Maintained substitute vacancy; one Maintained Secondary School vacancy and one Special Academy vacancy.</p>	

3.	<p>Apologies and Substitutions</p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Kath Kelly, Dave Hedley, Dawn Whitemore, Clive Wright and Carolyn Lewis.</p> <p>Liam Powell was substituting for Kath Kelly.</p>	
4.	<p>Minutes and Matters Arising</p> <p>The minutes of the meeting held on Monday 10 June 2019 were agreed</p> <p><u>Matters Arising - School Funding 2020/21</u></p> <p>Jenny Lawrence referred to the announcement in early September which stated there will be an increase in school funding of 4.8% per pupil – no caps or gains. Jenny was at this point unsure what the picture would be for Leicestershire but as soon as this information was available an analysis would be carried out for individual schools.</p>	
5.	<p>School Growth Policy</p> <p>Jenny Lawrence introduced the report which presents an updated policy for funding mainstream school growth for approval.</p> <p>Jenny explained that the growth policy for new schools and basic need growth was adopted some time ago. It was necessary to update that policy and part of the delay in bringing this to Schools Forum was being clear about DfE expectations around funding new schools. Jenny explained that new schools get lag funding. The policy has been formalised in what we do in terms of opening new schools; no option as the funding formula done which the EFA do but we do have discretion over prestart up costs in new schools and expanding schools.</p> <p>The proposed policy has been updated alongside the DfE's expectations of what growth funding should be and Jenny highlighted the criteria in Paragraph 5 for the allocation. The DfE state that the growth fund may not be used to support schools in financial difficulty or general growth to popularity. Jenny outlined the main points to the proposed policy as mentioned in paragraph 16.</p> <p>For illustrative purposes 2 different options have been modelled in terms of the financial impact of the proposed policy. There are a number of new schools opening in Leicestershire and therefore 2 scenarios have been looked at to get an understanding of how much growth policy is going to be required. Local authorities will no longer have their growth funding capped but the cost will also increase because of the September funding announcement.</p> <p>Karen Allen referred to the 2 different levels of funding if a school opened (£125,000) and the opening of a new classroom (£50,000) – would that be for one class. Jenny stated that expansion of one form entry it will be £50,000 each year whilst those years roll through the schools.</p> <p>Chris Parkinson - defining what the one form entry as different from</p>	

	<p>special school to primary school. Secondary opening a new year group – many forms of entry – special schools attached. Jenny stated that the growth policy does not apply to specialist provision – primary and secondary only. A separate policy is in place to fund growth specialist education provision.</p> <p>It was suggested that clarification was made on the policy and recirculated.</p> <p>Martin Towers commented that secondary growth is for 5 years – within modelling of two scenarios – a number of new children through the year. Jenny commented that a significant number of new schools are primary but the modelling follows the cost until the school is fully expanded.</p> <p>David Thomas asked how the 10% trigger impacts on the school planning process and how this is covered in the policy. Jenny commented that the policy is taking the trigger out and assessed through the school planning process and therefore no impact on this as a result.</p> <p>It was noted that the approval of the policy should include Maintained, Special School and Academy Members. Graham Bett queried why the DNCC representative was not allowed to vote. Jenny explained that the Schools Forum was split between schools and non-school members. The growth policy relates to schools and therefore non-school members should not vote.</p> <p>Schools Forum approved the Policy for funding school growth to be implemented from September 2019.</p>	
4.	<p>Proposed Transfer from Schools Block to High Needs Block 2020/21</p> <p>Jane Moore introduced the report which sets out Leicestershire County Council's intention to consult on a transfer of funding of up to 0.5% from the Schools block to the High Needs Block for 2020/21 as recommended in paragraphs 2 and 3. The draft consultation for the proposed schools block transfer was circulated confidentially to Schools Forum members only.</p> <p>It was noted that Schools Forum had previously been informed of the deficit on the High Needs Dedicated Schools Grant and the work being carried out to recover the deficit. The deficit is growing and consideration needs to be given to this as set out in the report – a transfer from the Schools block to High Needs of up to 0.5% for 2020/21.</p> <p>The Secretary of State announced there would be additional funding of £7M for special educational needs and analysis of this suggests Leicestershire will receive £5.4M which is insufficient to address the high needs deficit. At the moment the impact of moving between blocks cannot be assessed until detailed data at individual school level by the DfE is announced around late September/early October.</p> <p>Jane reported that Schools Forum was presented in September 2018 with the challenges for the high needs block and in June 2019 Schools Forum were informed of the Council's proposal to invest £30M capital</p>	

into new and expanded specialist provision and the impact of the number of EHCPs increasing.

Karen Allen asked about the timescales for the proposed consultation in terms of responding to the DfE and when will the funding agreement for each school be known. Karen also asked about the headroom in terms of settlement. Jenny said that she was not sure if there would be any headroom in the settlement and amount per pupil levels.

Karen Allen asked if the transfer goes ahead would 0.5% be taken off every budget. Jenny commented that because of the way the National Funding Formula operates with minimum and decrease there would not be a way to remove funding that would impact all schools evenly. It would depend where schools sit whether minimum or maximum – 0.5% out of age weighted unit. The modelling is really complex and there is so much uncertainty about budgets.

David Thomas commented that it would not impact equally – affected minimum level of funding - 160 schools at the floor – how many schools are on the minimum. This was something to consider.

Jane commented that whether mainstream or high needs the concern is around the transfer is the high needs spend. If the spending continues on the high needs budget the impact will be significant. Any monies taken out will enable a long term budget and will take less time to recover the budget.

David asked if there is a top slice already - 3 statements in last term and it looks at the contribution within the system does not match the occurrence in the statement – reimbursement 2013 – the money getting in to top up is not matching the cost – got your top slicing already. Jenny stated there was no transfer from schools to high needs. Local Authorities are required to get Schools Forum approval to do this.

Chris Swan commented that schools are already projecting a deficit and this is extremely concerning going forward. This is a Government problem and not a school problem.

Jane Moore agreed and conversations are happening with the DfE but this point needs to be clearly stated in the consultation.

Troy Jenkinson asked when the consultation was open to headteachers. Jenny said she was awaiting the detailed model from the DfE in order to assess the impact and therefore will open in October but will have a short period in which to respond. The consultation will be shared with school colleagues. In addition, it was noted LPH will be meeting tomorrow and secondary heads November.

Discussion took place that some schools have a carry forward which could distort the picture. Jenny commented that balances for maintained schools whether deficit or carry forward cannot be used when making school funding decisions, these balances cannot be used to meet the deficit.

Graham Bett suggested that if schools have a reserve the local authority may take some of this to use towards their deficit. Graham queried how much the County Council was in debt by. Jane Moore stated that it had been made clear that the SEND overspend is a critical issue for the County Council - projected £6M this year and rising to £13M which is unmanageable. There is a further £79M where savings need to be identified. Graham asked what the position of the current debt was for the County Council. Jenny stated that this would be confirmed in the minutes.

Jenny's response-

As at 31 March 2019 the local authority held just £24.5m in usable revenue reserves, after taking account of balances on school delegated budgets this falls to £15.8m (4%) of the local authority budget. The forecast DSG deficit would take all of this reserve and leave no flexibility for the local authority to respond to unexpected issues.

Karen said it was useful to note and no point in getting wrong figures.

Graham stated that one of the problems with this and the consultation is that the figures are not available. He added that the appropriate thing is not to do this at this point but to make these figures available and reconvene the situation when available.

Jean expressed concern about the way in which high needs seems to be separate to education when in fact they are linked. They are not two opposing set ups and come under the inclusion umbrella. The Government manage to find money for pupil premium so why can they not find money for special education.

Ros Hopkins commented that this situation was very difficult for every school but they are all our pupils. Apportioning money to those children in our education system is becoming increasingly difficult and the funding is not there in terms of staffing ratios. Karen agreed and stated that there are not enough LSAs working with SEN children. A staffing restructure is not an option and therefore this will push schools into deficit.

Julie McBrearty asked where the figure of 0.5% was proposed from. Jenny commented that the funding regulations state that this is the maximum that can be agreed locally.

Discussion took place on the number of EHCPs and if they increase more money will need to be put in. Jane outlined the work taken place to manage the high needs plan in order to reduce the budget and part of the savings is the ambition to slow the number of EHCPs down.

David Thomas asked if the consultation could be summarised onto one page.

Graham Bett asked what the timeline was. Jenny replied that the Schools Forum November meeting had been brought forward to consider approval of the transfer. Following this the County Council's Cabinet

	<p>meeting will be presented with the Schools Forum views. If Schools Forum do not agree any proposal by 30 November the local authority would need to take a decision on whether to seek Secretary of State approval.</p> <p>Schools Forum noted and commented on the intention of the local authority to consult on a proposal to transfer up to 0.5% from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block.</p> <p>Schools Forum noted the intention to seek nominations from each of Leicestershire Primary Heads (LPH) and Leicestershire Secondary Heads (LSH) a Headteacher and School Business Manager to consider the detail of a proposed transfer.</p> <p>Schools Forum nominated Martin Towers as the Schools Forum member to consider the detail of a proposed transfer.</p>	
5.	<p>Any Other Business</p> <p>Schools forum operational and good practice guide</p> <p>Please see link below which sets out information from the DfE about the operation of the Schools Forum. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/schools-forums-operational-and-good-practice-guide-2015</p>	
6.	<p>Date of Next Meeting</p> <p>Wednesday 6 November 2019 Monday 20 January 2020</p> <p>All at 2.00 – 4.00 pm at Beaumanor Hall.</p>	