

GLOUCESTERSHIRE SCHOOLS FORUM

Minutes of a meeting held on Thursday 10 January 2019
in the Council Chamber - Shire Hall, Gloucester.

Present:

Colin Belford	-	Secondary School Headteachers
Graham Doswell	-	Primary School Governors
Elisa Entwistle	-	Alternative Provision Schools
Andrew Harris	-	Secondary Head Teachers
Kate Hawkins	-	Special School Governor
Amanda Horniman	-	Early Years Providers
Rachel Howie	-	Gloucester Diocese
Dan Johnson	-	Primary School Headteachers
Lisa Jones	-	Primary School Headteachers
Gwyneth Keen	-	Early Years Providers
Will Morgan	-	Secondary School Headteachers
Sarah Murphy	-	Trade Unions
Alexander Norman	-	Secondary School Governors
Sue Padfield	-	Secondary School Governors
Jacqui Phillips	-	Secondary Governors
Steve Savory	-	Primary Head Teachers
Clare Steel	-	Special School Headteacher

Observers:

Cllr Richard Boyles , Cabinet Member for Children and Young People
Cllr Lynden Stowe, Cabinet Member: Economy, Skills and Growth

Officers:

Tim Browne, Director of Education
Stewart King, Lead Commissioner: Education Strategy and Development
Neil Egles, Finance Manager, Schools Strategy and Capital
Suzanne Hall, Finance Business Partner
Joanne Bolton, Democratic Services Adviser and Clerk to the Forum.

Apologies:

Matthew Bishop, Primary School Governors
Sara Byrne, Primary School Governors
Penny Chislett, Post-16 Education
Liam Jordan, Clifton Diocese
Karen Lewis, Primary Head Teachers
Ian Marshall, Primary School Governors

Stuart Wilson, Secondary Head Teachers

1. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

No public questions had been received.

2. MINUTES

- 2.1 The minutes of the previous meeting held on 15 November 2019 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.
- 2.2 The Forum noted that there were no outstanding actions from the previous meeting.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

4. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR

No nominations were received for the election of a Vice-Chair.

5. GLOUCESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL BUDGET CONSULTATION 2019

- 5.1 Suzanne Hall, Finance Business Partner, introduced the report which informed members of the budget strategy and draft details for 2019/20 and the Medium Term Financial Strategy covering the period 2019/20 to 2021/22. The Forum noted that full details of the draft budget for 2019/20, and the Medium Term Financial Strategy for the period covering 2019/20 to 2021/22, were presented to Cabinet on 19 December 2018.
- 5.2 The Forum also received a presentation on the proposed changes to the Children and Families budget, plus an outline of the cost pressures and the risk and challenges. (For information – A copy of the slides has been uploaded to the Council's website and is included in the signed minute book.)
- 5.3 The Forum noted that it was proposed that Children and Families achieve cost reductions of £2.25M and receive cost increases of £13.15M, a net increase in budget of £10.9M. The investment being proposed was in recognition of the pressures on the Children and Families budget during 2018/19, which was forecast an overspend of £9.83M before the offset of the business rates retention income.
- 5.4 During the presentation particular reference was made to:
- The investment being proposed in recognition of the pressures on the Vulnerable Children and Young People element of the budget during 2018/19. In particular, the sum of £6.2M of additional investment for the External Placement Budget to meet the cost and demand pressures for

ensuring the most appropriate placements for the increasing numbers of children in care.

- The additional investment of £3.514M for additional social work capacity and initiatives to support recruitment.
- The £1.7M of saving against placements through improved commissioning and review of costs.
- The investment being proposed in recognition of the pressures on the other Children's Services element of the budget, in particular the sum of £0.069M for staff to support the increase in Education, Health, and Care Plan.
- The £0.250M saving in relation to Education Services, through aligning the intervention and support capacity with demand/changing number of local authority maintained schools and academies.

5.5 The Forum was informed that the Government had recently (December 2018) announced an additional £4.322M of ringfenced grant funding for Social Care, to be allocated equally between Adult Care and Vulnerable Children. The announcement was made after the proposed budget had been formulated and therefore the draft budget position presented to the Forum did not include the additional funding.

5.6 In response to a question on the investment of £3.514M for additional social work capacity and initiatives to support recruitment, the Finance Business Partner explained that there was strong competition between neighbouring authorities to attract and recruit newly qualified social workers.

5.7 Gloucestershire County Council's recruitment drive had focused on promoting its comprehensive training, support and supervision package. The Forum welcomed the news that nearly all of the Team Manager post vacancies had now been recruited to.

5.8 The Forum recognised that the Council was setting a budget within a challenging funding environment, and members noted the budget proposals.

5.9 The Forum noted that the Council's budget consultation survey would close on 21 January 2019. Final approval of the budget would be considered at the Cabinet meeting on 30 January 2019 and at the Full Council meeting on 13 February 2018.

6. DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT 2019/20

6.1 Stewart King, Lead Commissioner for Education Strategy and Development, presented the report which outlined the implications of the announcements on the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) for 2019/20.

6.2 The Forum was informed that the DSG for 2019/20 totalled £451.1M, this represented an increase in the total DSG of £10.3M (2.3%) from the current 2018/19 DSG, and included the additional funding for High Needs. The Forum noted the DSG total for each of the four allocation blocks (Schools, Central School Services, High Needs, and Early Years) as set out in the report.

- 6.3 The Forum was informed that Gloucestershire's expected requirement for growth costs in 2019/20, was £1.6M. The Forum noted that the growth allocation in the Schools Block 2019/20 totalled £2.6M. This had been calculated using the new method introduced by the DfE which allocated on a lagged basis, based on positive growth between census dates using middle super output areas. The £1.0M balance now not needed for growth, could be used as part of the 2019/20 delegated funding formula to schools.
- 6.4 The Lead Commissioner for Education Strategy and Development explained that on 16 December 2018, the Secretary of State had announced some additional funding for High Needs. Gloucestershire would receive an additional £1.35M revenue funding in 2018/19, and the same amount again in 2019/20. The Forum noted that that the Council's appeal to the Secretary of State (not supported by the School's Forum) for a 0.25% transfer from the Schools Block to High Needs had now been withdrawn.
- 6.5 Officers emphasised that the pressure on the High Needs budget remained, and that the overspend had continued to accelerate. The Forum noted that the 2018/19 High Needs forecast budget position (reflecting the national picture), was showing a £4.7M overspend (allowing for the £1.35M additional funding) before the High Needs carry forward reserve was applied which would reduce the overspend to £2.7M. The Lead Commissioner for Education Strategy and Development stressed that the overspend was significant and that it placed Gloucestershire in a serious and challenging position.
- 6.6 It was reported that whilst the additional High Needs funding had eased the deficit to a degree, recovering the budget position remained heavily dependent on a favourable Spending Review settlement for 2020/21 onwards; and finding strategic solutions locally. Given the severity of the situation the Forum agreed to hold a High Needs Seminar on Thursday 28 February 2019, for members to consider the possible solutions in greater depth.
ACTION: Stewart King
- 6.7 It was agreed that Forum members would advise the Lead Commissioner for Education Strategy and Development, via email, on the High Needs budget issues and potential solutions, which they felt should be considered in greater depth, to enable the seminar to be structured accordingly. Forum members were asked to complete this by 31 January 2019.
ACTION: Joanne Bolton
- 6.8 Clare Steel, Special School Headteacher representative, stressed to officers that in view of the special schools being full and oversubscribed this year, it was crucial that special school headteachers were informed, as soon as possible, of how many places their schools were expected to accommodate for September next year. The Special School headteacher representative asked officers to provide clarification on the plans for pupils, whose named special school (in their EHCP) was already oversubscribed.
ACTION: Stewart King.

- 6.9 The Forum agreed to carry forward any DSG deficit, following the decision to not transfer funds from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block, and resulting from the increase in High Needs costs.
- 6.10 A summary of the 2019/20 funding formula proposal was presented to the Forum.
- 6.11 Annex A to the report set out the 2019/20 DSG specific units of funding by local authority and the ranking out of 149 local authorities (1=high, 149=low). The Forum noted that Gloucestershire's position was ranked 89 for the Schools Block primary unit of funding; 130 for the secondary element of unit funding; 92 for the Central School Services Block; and 63 for the High Needs Block aca weighted basic entitlement factor unit rate. The Lead Commissioner for Education Strategy and Development explained that the low ranking of the primary unit of funding reflected the overall cost of Gloucestershire having a number of small primary schools. The economic profile of Gloucestershire reflected why Gloucestershire was not a winner in regards to High Needs funding.
- 6.12 The Forum was informed that the school funding formula would allocate the budget to schools in line with the National Funding Formula (NFF), as closely as it was possible to get within DfE rules. However, there was a mismatch between the NFF and the basis on which local authorities had to submit their formulae. And the funding allocated to local authorities did not fully reflect the impact of school census data changes between October 2017 and October 2018. The Forum noted that unless the methodology changed, the same issues would recur in future years i.e. it would not be possible to fund the NFF in full.
- 6.13 Members of the Forum expressed strong concerns regarding the Minimum Funding Level (MFL) per pupil. The MFL was resulting in an unfair situation where schools with pupils with few additional needs were being funded at the same level of funding as a school with a significant number of pupils with additional needs. The Forum noted that 21 secondary schools in Gloucestershire were on the MFL.
- 6.14 The Forum noted that a percentage reduction of 0.46% had been made to the delegated formula, in order to avoid a £0.8M overspend of the Schools Block. The reduction had been applied to all of the NFF factors, in order to balance back the funding available. Due to the NFF 1% funding floor and the 0% MFG, the funding shortfall could not be taken from those protected schools, and those which were not protected therefore had to bear more of the £0.8M shortfall via the 0.46% reduction.
- 6.15 Members of the Forum acknowledged that the extra government funding for High Needs had improved the Gloucestershire schools budget picture to a degree. However, members remained deeply concerned that some schools in Gloucestershire were being inadequately funded, which could result in negative consequences, such as staff redundancies, and the withdrawal of support services no longer affordable.

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6.16 Forum members felt strongly that it was critical that the funding formula allocated sufficient funding to a school to cover its core costs, *and* the extra cost of additional services for SEND and deprivation. The Forum acknowledged that the F40 group was continuing to campaign for a NFF that was fair and implemented on a reasonable timescale; in addition, members felt that there was a need for a co-ordinated Forum campaign for fair school funding. It was agreed that a sub-group of the Forum would be established, to facilitate an in-depth look at the critically important funding issues across the areas of Schools, High Needs and Early Years. The focus of the group would be on debating specific issues such as the need for a co-ordinated Forum campaign for fair school funding.

ACTION: Joanne Bolton

6.17 Members of the Forum acknowledged that the proposed school funding formula was representative of the current funding situation. The Forum recommended the Council to agree the 2019/20 school funding formula as set out at Annex C to the report for submission to the ESFA. The Forum noted that it was subject to approval by the ESFA before 2019/20 budgets were notified to individual schools by 28 February 2019.

6.18 The Forum acknowledged that whilst the focus had been heavily on High Needs funding of late, Early Years funding was also of critical concern, and was highly relevant to the High Needs debate, particularly regarding the issue of improving school readiness. Amanda Horniman and Gwyneth Keen, the Early Years representatives on the Forum, gave a detailed account of the cost pressures facing the sector.

6.19 The Early Years representatives reported that in April 2017, the Government had invested an additional £300M into increasing childcare funding rates for two, three, and four year olds in England, in response to sector concerns about funding levels. However, various research had shown that childcare funding remained inadequate. Gwyneth Keen quoted from research released in May 2018 from sector analysts Ceeda, which had found that, for private and voluntary nurseries and pre-schools:

- The cost of delivering two year old places was £6.90, compared to an average government funding rate of £5.23 – a shortfall of **32%**.
- The cost of delivering three to four year old places was £5.08, compared to an average government funding rate of £4.34 – a shortfall of **17%**.

6.20 In total, Ceeda had estimated that there was currently a £616.5M shortfall in the private and voluntary early years sector.

6.21 The Early Years representatives stressed that costs had risen significantly in the last couple of years with the implementation of the national living wage, and all business having to implement pension contributions. The nursery grant in Gloucestershire had not increased to reflect those changes. The consequences of those cost pressures meant that many settings were running at a loss and were struggling to stay in business. Private nurseries were managing on minimum wages with a high turnover of staff. This was against a backdrop of more children

coming into Early Years with SENDs, and an increased onus on providers through EHCPs to deliver the required support for those children.

6.22 The Forum was strongly of the view that quality Early Years provision was hugely important and could have a far-reaching positive impact on a child's development. The Forum felt that it should agree the recommendations in the report as outlined below; however, there was recognition that without funding increases in the future, both the quality and availability of early years places were at risk. It was acknowledged that the quality supplement would need to be reviewed for 2020/21.

6.23 The Forum recommended the Council to agree:

- To the hourly rates for 2, 3 and 4 year olds to remain at the same level as 2018/19.
- To the quality supplement being de-delegated to the Local Authority to enable all early years providers to have access to advice and information on quality standards.
- To set the target for central costs at the maximum level.

6.24 Sarah Murphy, Teaching Union Representative, informed the Forum of the National Education Union (NEU) campaign work on Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) funding, and the impact this was having. She explained that the General Secretaries of the NEU had received a letter from Nadhim Zahawi MP Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Children and Families. The letter referenced the 34,000 signature petition about funding for children and young people with SEND, which was delivered to the DfE in October 2018, by the NEU and School Cuts. The letter also outlined the news of the additional Government funding for High Needs. The Union representative commented that the NEU felt that the additional Government funding for High Needs to be a victory for its campaign.

7. SCHOOLS FORUM WORKPLAN 2019

7.1 Stewart King, the Lead Commissioner for Education Strategy and Development, explained that the focus of the Forum over the next year would continue to be on High Needs and Early Years funding.

7.2 The Forum noted the proposed Workplan for 2019.

8. ELECTIONS 2019

8.1 The Forum received a report which outlined the plans for the Schools Forum Elections 2019.

8.2 The Forum noted the report.

9. F40

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The Chair confirmed that both himself and Forum member Will Morgan, would be attending the f40 Executive Committee meetings as the Gloucestershire representatives.

Chair

Meeting concluded at 3.30 pm